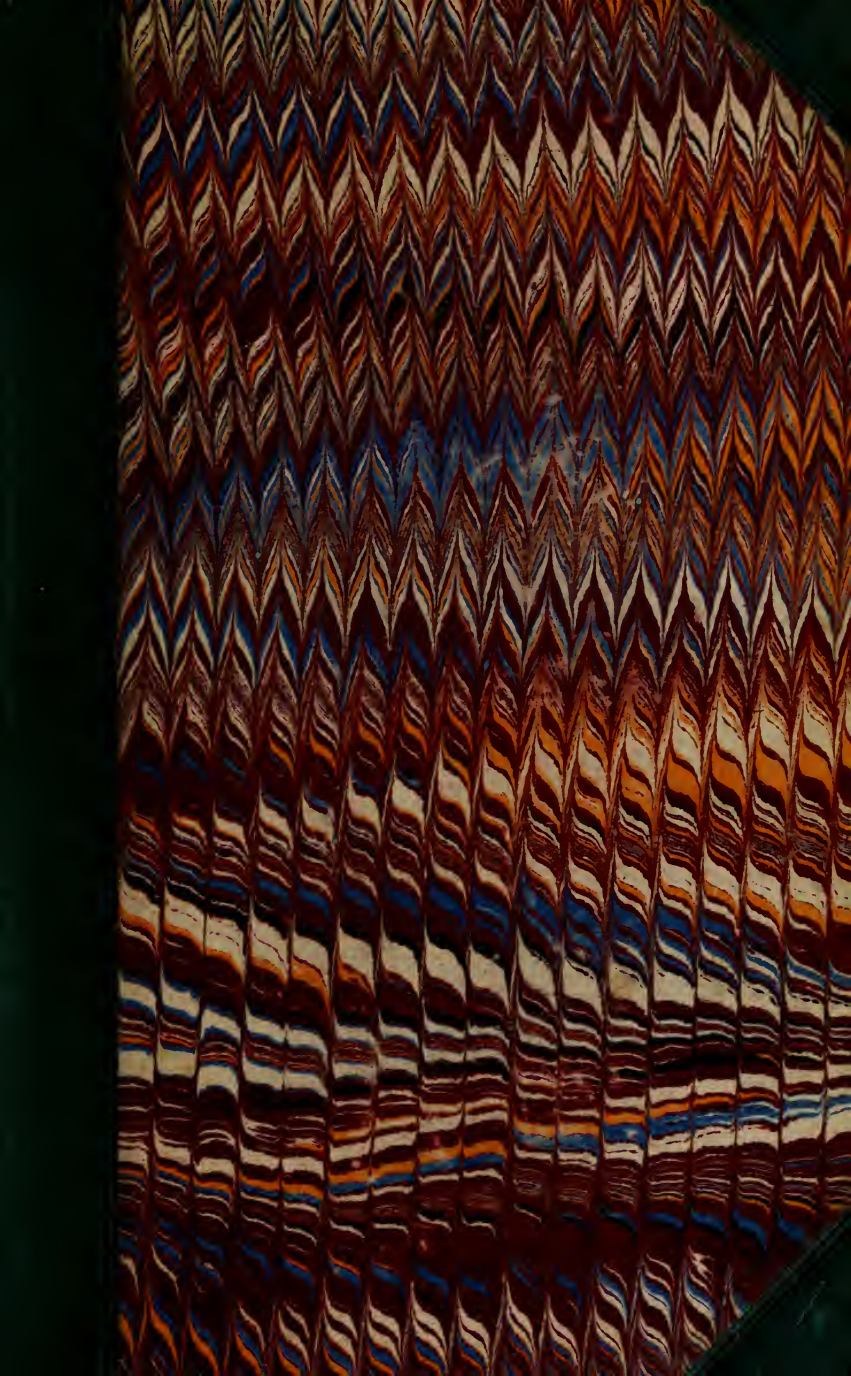






LIBRARY  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF ILLINOIS

823  
T130  
v. 2





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2010 with funding from  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign







ONE MAIDEN ONLY.

VOL. II.

“ Kind souls, you wonder why, love you,  
While you, you wonder why, love none :  
We love, sir, for the good we do,  
Not that which unto us is done.”

# ONE MAIDEN ONLY.

BY

EDWARD CAMPBELL TAINSH,

AUTHOR OF

“ST. ALICE,” “CROWNED,”

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,  
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1870.

*The right of Translation is reserved.*

LONDON  
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL,  
BLENHEIM HOUSE.



823  
T130  
v. 2

## ONE MAIDEN ONLY.

---

### CHAPTER I.

**M**R. MONCTON received Hartley's letter while he was sitting at dinner with his family ; he put it down by the side of his plate, unopened, with a frown, and went on eating in silence. It happened that this day Giles was giving to his kindred the somewhat rare pleasure of his society, and sitting near to his father, he saw the handwriting.

"Why, that's from Hartley," he said ; "it must be something important, I should think. You saw him at the office just now, didn't you ?"

Mr. Moncton muttered something that was very like an oath, and the others looked uncomfortable.

"What's the matter ?" said Giles ; "you

all seem very mysterious. Has the paragon been misbehaving himself?"

"Confound you! Hold your tongue, will you?" said Mr. Moncton, looking up savagely at his son.

"My dear!" said Mrs. Moncton; and then to Giles, "we do not wish you to speak of Mr. Leighton again, Giles."

"Then perhaps you'll tell me why not," said Giles, irritated by his father's words; "I'm not a baby to have my mouth shut without a reason."

"I'll tell you the reason, Giles," said Etta, looking him full in the face; "Mr. Leighton has jilted me."

"Indeed he has not, my child; how dare you say such a thing of yourself."

"Indeed, he *has*, mamma; anybody would tell you that he jilted me."

"Jilted you, has he, Etta? Serves you right, too; you ought to have known what the ass was worth. The snob! I reckon I'll give him a bit of my mind when I meet him!"

Etta laughed. "You had better, Giles. I should think he would not want any worse

punishment than to be lectured by you on his conduct."

"Curse him!" said Giles, too pre-occupied by his own emotions to be touched by his sister's scorn; "coming here with his airs and graces, lording it over everybody, and setting up for an angel of light. A pretty disgrace to the family, indeed. I'll break every bone in his skin if I meet him!"

"Have you done dinner, mamma?" said Etta; and though her mamma had by no means done, she said "yes;" and she and Etta and Ada left the table.

After they were gone, Mr. Moncton opened the letter. He read it through twice, and then threw it to his son.

"It serves him right," said Giles; "I hope he'll die like a dog. I wouldn't throw him a crust if it would save his life."

Giles felt himself avenged by his loud, coarse words, for all Hartley's assumptions of superior virtue. Mr. Moncton did not take much pains to respond to his son's indignation; but, after brooding ever so long, he said, as to himself,

“A *fool* the fellow is, to have thrown away such a splendid chance as that. Nobody wanted him to marry the child, if he would but have let her alone.”

Mr. Moncton could not quite get over Hartley's resignation for a long time. And when he told his wife about the letter, they grieved, in secret from themselves, so to say, over this miscarriage of one who had been dearer to them than their own son.

Giles was possessed by his indignation. He tried to talk to Etta about it, but she would have none of it; and even Ada turned a scornful ear to her brother's heroics. But, none the less, Giles was possessed by his indignation, and seemed to enjoy keenly the rare luxury of moral superiority. He determined that he would not wait for chance to bring him into contact with Hartley; he would look out for him; he would go in quest of him; he would beard him in his den. By these leaps Giles vaulted to the summit of his purpose, and then there came a pause and a slight reaction. He would not go to-night, at all events. This

was in the evening of the day following that on which Mr. Moncton had received Hartley's letter.

The next day Giles was making a call, as sometimes, though not often, unless it were upon a bachelor acquaintance of the brandy-and-water and broad joke type, he did. The excuse for his weakness upon the present occasion was that, having seen one of the ladies of the house at his mother's a few evenings before, he had been so struck with her, that her image had seriously disturbed the calm equanimity with which he usually passed on from the important hour of breakfast, through the still more important hour of dinner, to the hours, most important of all, of good-fellowship and languid dissipation that closed the day. This lady was not a stranger to Giles, but she had never before had the honour to attract his attention; and it may be that his new-born acquaintance with the emotion of love, even though that emotion was not of a keener intensity than the passions of an oyster, say, helped somewhat to quicken his indignation against

the fickleness or the treason of Hartley.

The ladies upon whom Giles was calling were a Mrs. Eythorne and her two daughters, Frances and Sophia. Sophia was the younger, and the elect of Giles's devotion. Her responsiveness did not seem great, and, indeed, all three of the ladies appeared to be rather amused than anything else at Giles's call.

Giles, however, did his best bravely.

"I wanted to call ever so long ago—the day after you were at our house, in fact," he said; "but I have been so busy, that I could not manage it."

Mrs. Eythorne looked gravely sympathetic at the extent of Giles's burdens and duties; but Frances said—

"Oh! do you work, Mr. Giles? I thought you never did anything but smoke. Tell us what you do, and what has made you so busy."

Giles laughed, as if a delicate compliment had been paid him, and said—

"Thought I did nothing but smoke, did you?" And then to Sophia, with a touch

of bovine tenderness in his manner—"Did you think so too, Miss Sophia?"

Miss Sophia was not sure that she had thought about it at all, but she made no doubt that, had she done so, she should have arrived at the same conclusion as her sister. Like her sister, too, she should immensely like to know what his occupations really were.

Giles was in the middle of a full account of his many cares and duties, when a fresh caller was announced, under the name of "Mr. Hartley Leighton."

This was Hartley's first visit to the Eythornes since his return from his holiday. Mrs. Eythorne and her daughters knew nothing of what had passed in the Moncton family these latter days, so they received their new visitor all unsuspecting of the storm that was hanging over their heads.

Hartley came into the room with his old easy manner of assured welcomeness as strong upon him as ever. To have looked at him, you would have felt sure that no cloud had ever crossed *his* heart or life.

“Well,” he said, shaking hands with Mrs. Eythorne and her daughters, “I hope you have been pining to see me. I couldn’t get here before, but I have been thinking about you night and day.”

“Of course we have been pining for you, and of course you have been thinking about us,” said Mrs. Eythorne, as she would have done to her own son, had he made a similar nonsense-speech; while the girls smiled, and beamed upon him as if he were a very welcome visitor indeed.

Giles was standing by, not softened in his feelings towards Hartley by the reception to which he was witness; in a minute Hartley saw him.

“Ah! Giles,” said he, with scarcely a flicker in his manner, and holding out his hand—“I didn’t see you.”

Giles scowled upon him, and kept back his hand. “I don’t shake hands with a villain,” he said.

Hartley’s face flushed, and the ladies opened their eyes in unmeasured astonishment.



"You are right; nor I with an ill-bred churl henceforth," Hartley said, turning contemptuously from him.

Giles glared upon him.

"What do you mean by an ill-bred churl, you impertinent puppy and scoundrel?" he said.

"What do I mean by an ill-bred churl?" Hartley said, looking round full in Giles's face—"I mean *you*, man; don't you know yourself after all these years?" Then, turning to Mrs. Eythorne, he said, "I'll go—shall I?"

"I think you had better," she answered; and smiling round at the girls, he went.

Giles stood glaring, his face as red as brandy and water could have made it, almost, and, for a minute, too full of his passion to find words for its utterance. Then he burst out—

"The sneaking liar and impostor! I always hated the beast, with his fine airs, and silky manners, and confounded impertinence; I should like to whip him to death like a dog. You may smile at him, and

make much of him as long as you like, and then he'll turn upon you, and jilt you and insult you just as he has my poor sister at home. The smooth-faced scoundrel, I hate him ! ”

“ I think you had better go, my dears,” Mrs. Eythorne said to her daughters ; and the girls went, paying no adieux to Giles. Then she said to him, “ I must beg you not to repeat the favour of this call, Mr. Mone-ton ; and you will, I hope, permit me to say that, if your sister has been injured by any one, or if you think that she has, a repetition of such scenes as this will scarcely be the best thing that you can do to win her thanks for your championship.”

Giles understood little more of this speech than the part that told him that he was not to repeat his call ; and this part did not tend to soothe his passion, or to chasten his language. He broke out in a fresh burst of abuse and hate against Hartley, and only when Mrs. Eythorne had left the room, saying, “ I regret that I must leave you, sir,” did his words stop. Then he went downstairs,

and a servant met him and let him out, and shut behind him the door of Mrs. Eythorne's house, and that other door which opened on bright visions of an oyster-paradise, his no more for ever. Giles, however, had not gone many steps from the door of paradise, before another object than his lost visions challenged his attention.

Hartley, as soon as he had left Mrs. Eythorne's house, had gone on to make another call. But as he went he thought, and thinking, it occurred to him that his just-accomplished act might very easily take the construction of his having been prompt to get out of Giles's way. Now, ordinarily, he would have been in no impatient hurry to redeem his character from the suspicion of cowardice. At the present time, however, two things marred his calm belief in the power of his courage to vindicate itself. One of these was the fact that he carried a not quite easy conscience in his bosom; the other that the plans he had already begun to form left but little time in which this vindication could take place. So, moved by these

thoughts, when he had gone a little way from Mrs. Eythorne's house, he half-unconsciously turned back, and in so doing brought himself face to face with Giles. Each man saw the other approaching before they actually met, and Giles's hot indignation blazed up into fury at the sight of his enemy. Hartley was calm ; contempt made him that. Giles's insulting words had had little power to sting him, even at the moment ; and now he was indifferent to them. As he came up to Giles, he looked towards him, not essaying to stop unless the other accosted him, but simply to show that he was not afraid. Giles, however, drew up in front of him.

"Well, you sneaking coward," he said ;  
"I've got you at last, have I ?"

"I came back in case you might wish to renew our conversation in this less inappropriate place."

"Did you? Curse you ! It would have made little difference to me if you had run a hundred miles. I'd have tracked you to your kennel, wherever you might have crept to !"

"You surpass yourself, my dear sir. But my ears are delicate. If you have nothing more pleasant or more to the point to say, I'll pass on."

"Curse you! You won't pass on till I've done with you, and that won't be just this moment, I can tell you!"

Giles's passion had mastered him, and for a moment it took the place of the courage of which he had not too much. As he spoke, he put his hand on Hartley's arm to stop him as he made to move on.

Hartley flashed at that. With his other hand he pushed Giles sharply back, saying as he did so—

"Touch me, you cur? Keep your foul hands to yourself."

Giles staggered back, but kept his feet. Then, with the walking-stick he held in his hand, he aimed a savage blow at Hartley's face, which, missing the face, came down upon his ear, and maddened him with a stinging pain that was almost intolerable for the moment. But he caught hold of the stick as it glanced from his face, and wrench-

ing it from Giles's hand, he flung it out across the road. Then, springing at him, he struck him a telling blow between the eyes, and the ox was felled.

For a moment Hartley stood over his enemy. He was a couple of inches shorter, and a stone or two lighter, perhaps, but every ounce of him was good healthy flesh and bone, while Giles was pulpy with brandy and beer and smoke.

Giles struggled up, cursing and swearing as even he had never done before, and rushed blindly on Hartley. It was soon over, and in a moment he was down again, more heavily than at first. Hartley stood, looking double his proper size and power, flashing down upon him. By him stood some railings that shut in the area of the house opposite which they were. It took but an instant. Stooping quickly, he caught hold of the body of his prostrate foe with both hands, and lifting him by a sudden strain and jerk over the railings, he dropped him into the area below. The fall was eight feet.

The street in which this battle took place was a quiet one, yet before the encounter was over more than one spectator was within seeing range. The fact moved Hartley but little, and as soon as he had emptied his hands of Giles, he walked as proudly away as though a very St. George had dealt final justice upon the great dragon himself. Then he went back to Mrs. Eythorne's house.

Mrs. Eythorne received him gravely. She had been pondering what had happened. With Giles and his coarse tongue she had certainly no sympathy. But there was probably a cause for his anger, and if the cause were such as his words implied, then there was reason why she should look gravely at Hartley.

"I am very glad you have come back," she said; "that man's words have made me feel uncomfortable about you."

"Uncomfortable about me! Why, I wonder?"

"I should not like that which he seemed to imply to be true."

"You would not think the worse of me

for anything that *he* could say, I should hope."

"I certainly would not if you told me that what he said was untrue. What did he mean by saying that you had jilted and insulted his sister?"

"Whatever he meant, he lied, for I have done neither."

"I do not ask you to tell me anything that you do not wish to tell," Mrs. Eythorne said; "but I should be very glad to be sure that no one has a right to complain of you."

Hartley had told himself again and again that no one *had* a right to complain of him, but that rather he had a right to complain of a great many people. But now when Mrs. Eythorne asked him to assert his conviction, he could not quite manage it. He tried, and his inability to do so irritated him, so he said, instead,

"As for that, people, with or without right, complain of so many things, that he is a fortunate man whom no one finds fault with."

Mrs. Eythorne felt that Hartley had de-



clined to answer her doubts. She was very sorry. She liked him warmly ; yet now she could not doubt that Giles and his family had some reason to feel aggrieved at his behaviour to them.

Then the girls came in, and the conversation turned to indifferent matters. Hartley talked freely, yet he could not carry himself after his usual fashion, and he left, feeling that he must not count upon the Eythornes being as great friends to him as heretofore.

As he walked to his rooms, he was at first half inclined to call himself a fool for having gone back to the Eythornes at all. But upon this point he presently altered his mind. He must have gone some time and soon ; and whenever he had gone, he would have had the same difficulty to grapple with that he had now so poorly met. Yet he did not see how he could have met it better. That he and the Monctons had parted, and that the Monctons felt themselves aggrieved by him, must have come to be known, and the rest followed. A certain amount of gossip was in-

evitable after all that had happened. He must grin and bear it. Yet his grin, as he came to this conclusion, was not a cheerful one, for to men of Hartley's type there are few things more hateful than the being unfavourably talked over.

One practical effect the events of the morning had upon Hartley. Notwithstanding he had cut himself off from all to whom he was most closely bound, he had, until now, still felt a lingering desire to cling, in some sort, to his old life and his old connexions, on account of the many faces that smiled on him wherever he went. But now, if these smiling faces were to become critical faces, and if words of praise were to turn into words of gossip or blame, then he had no desire to continue in his old surroundings. Better strange faces than critical ones; he could soon teach new faces to smile on him, he thought; and so his resolve was brought to full ripeness.

One present satisfaction he had, and keenly enjoyed. He had humbled that bully Giles. For some time past his part had

been to receive rather than to administer humiliation. But at last the tables were turned, and the picture of Giles prostrate under his blow, and ludicrous under his later punishment, afforded him satisfaction enough to more than balance the annoyance that the morning had brought him. The glow of a great satisfaction was upon him, and he went home in better spirits than he had known for a good many days past.

Meantime, Giles was in the area, or in process of delivery therefrom. The two heavy falls that Hartley had given him upon the pavement above had taken a good deal out of him; and when he found himself dropped so unceremoniously into the area, he was finished, courage and all. He did not even any more swear, and than this no completer proof of utter collapse could have come from him. For a minute he lay still upon the area floor, and by the end of this time two or three passers-by had reached the spot, and were looking down over the railings upon his prostrate form. Then, with some little difficulty, for he was pretty well bruised, he

got up, and cast about for the means of escape. But there were no means; the walls of the area were too smooth to be scaled, and of steps there were none. All the time the passers-by looked down from above, not wholly grave of countenance, and their attentions and comments afforded him neither comfort nor encouragement. In a little time the crowd around the area attracted the notice of the inhabitants of the house, and then the cause of the gathering was soon made known. Giles was admitted through the door of the kitchen into the house, and the explanation of his mysterious appearance in the area was asked of him. The explanation he gave was very obviously false, but, by the mercy of his jailers, he was suffered to depart, though amid their ill-concealed smiles, as soon as the crowd that awaited his exit through the street-door had lost their patience and departed. Then he went home and brushed his clothes with his own hands, but he never spoke of the pain that all attitudes of sitting and standing for some days caused him, nor

did he tell Etta of all his achievements in his championship of her fair name and fame.

But the outside world was less discreet. Gradually the rumour spread that a quarrel had taken place between the Monctons and Hartley; and then, with more or less accuracy, the cause of the quarrel came to be stated. Presently the story of the combat between Hartley and Giles was passed about, and the area scene, embellished by the imaginations of many tellers, figured conspicuously in the narrative. And in due course all this came to the ears of the Moncton family, and made them very angry indeed. Etta would not speak to her brother for weeks after, and Ada laughed in his face, almost, whenever she met him.

"A pretty thing, isn't it, to have such a confounded fool of a son?" said Mr. Moncton; and, indeed, the storm that pelted down upon the head of Giles was so fierce, that Mrs. Moncton was moved to the defence of her hopeful first-born.

"Poor Giles!" said she, "you needn't all be so hard upon him. I'm sure he meant

well, after all, however it may have turned out."

"Meant well, did he, the ass!" said Mr. Moncton, with an air of unutterable scorn—"it's a pity he should have departed from his rule for this once, and to such purpose. I hope to goodness he will never mean well again as long as he lives; he is much less unpleasant and dangerous when he means ill, the idiot!"

So, neither in mind nor in muscle, did Giles reap reward or satisfaction from his heroic deeds on behalf of his injured sister. That Mr. Moncton's fervent aspiration after his son's persistent continuance in ill-meaning would be realised, seemed more likely now than ever; for while he loved his kindred and all his kind less than ever he had done, he hated Hartley with an intensity that was wholly out of proportion to all his previous sentiments, and seemed monstrous in its contrast with all the other faint notes of the series of oyster emotions that completed the gamut of his heart.

## CHAPTER II.

IN his letter to the directors, Hartley had requested that he might be permitted to abstain from at all entering upon the duties of his new appointment. The request, in the nature of the case, could not but be complied with ; and as, by accepting the new appointment, he had become separated from the old one, he was free altogether, and at once.

How, now, should he use his freedom, was the question. He had the world to begin again. How and where should he begin it? He had a considerable number of friends still, of whatever quality they might be. Of what quality *were* they? How would they serve him, if he attempted to use them?—and *should* he attempt to use them? These and such questions Hartley pondered for some time, and then the an-



swer came out clear and distinct. He would begin the world again, but not in the old surroundings. It should be a new world as well as a new beginning. Of whatever quality his friends might be, he would not try them; he would be his own friend this time. He was free—he would be free to some purpose. So he resolved, and before long all his acquaintance knew that Hartley Leighton meant to travel.

With present properties he was not so burdened that their disposing took long to accomplish. He had rather expensive rooms on his hands; these he gave notice that he would leave in a fortnight. He had some clothes; these he would carry with him. He had a number of books; some of these he sold, others he gave away, and the rest he would carry with him also. When these matters were arranged, there was nothing else of this kind left for him to do. His money was no burden to him; he had nearly a half-year's salary, neither more nor less.

And his travels—to where, and for what objects should they be? Beyond the an-



swer that he would go where he could earn a living, and, if possible, a fortune, Hartley's mind was vague enough upon this point ; and when his friends asked him where he meant to travel, he answered that he had not yet made his plans.

Hartley resolved that he would call upon everybody he knew before he left. He was not going to sneak away as if he were either ashamed of himself, or down in the world. These rather numerous calls he accordingly made, and they were, upon the whole, a great success. The tone and manner he hit upon was just the right one. He was neither jubilant nor defiant ; but neither was he lachrymose or cowed. He had quarrelled with the Monctons ; he was sorry ; they were good friends, and to lose them was a great loss. When the cause of the quarrel was glanced at, he said that it would ill-become him to defend himself, or blame himself, in such a case. Outsiders must think as they pleased ; it was certain that they would think wrong, whatever they thought. Of Etta he had none but good words to say ;

though of words, good or otherwise, he uttered none, unless he were forced to do so. He had fought with Giles! Yes, it was a pity; it could not be helped; Giles was a blackguard, and a great fool into the bargain. He had dropped Giles down the area! Did they think it a joke? It was just the simplest way of getting rid of him. He had resigned his new appointment. Yes, it was a loss; but the act was his own, and he was not at all inclined to fret over it. To fortune there were more paths than one in this big world.

So Hartley carried himself, and people, before long, took his cue, and left off either blaming him much, or pitying him much. The story of his combat with Giles helped him immensely, by raising a laugh that was all to his advantage. His tone about Etta won for him golden opinions. When in female conclave, a thousand times repeated, the matter was talked over, the weight of adverse judgment fell ten times more heavily upon the poor child than upon him. Not many faces beamed less brightly

upon him than before, and when he had gone the round of his farewell calls, he was, perhaps, more popular than ever.

Meantime, he had resolved upon the first move in his new career. He had said to himself that this fresh venture should be made in a new world, and the very expression suggested to him the thought which soon took form in a definite purpose. What new world would be so good for him as *the* New World, he thought. In England there was but one world. For foreigners he had no taste. Australia was a very fine place, no doubt, but he did not altogether take to sheep farming or Melbourne politics. America was the only new world that was not a *raw* world—that had got on far enough in life to find much work for brains; and to America he would go. In this resolve he never wavered, though it took him but an hour or two to form it, after the idea first entered his mind.

Forthwith he began to make preparations for his early departure. The fortnight he had given himself in his fine rooms amply

sufficed for all he had to do, including the making of his numerous calls. He devoted a day to buying such things as he would want on his not very tremendous voyage, and such others, as far as his finances permitted, as might be useful to him on his arrival. He paid all his bills, took his passage to New York, bought the best guide to the States he could hear of, that he might study it on the journey out, and then counted his money. He had something over thirty pounds.

So the evening came on the morrow of which Hartley was to go down to Liverpool. He was alone, having said his last good-bye, and he sat at tea in excellent spirits.

“Hartley is fond of excitement,” Mrs. Winthrop had said once, in his previous state of being ; “and Hartley is fond of excitement *still*,” he said to himself. The idea of his new life in a new world grew more and more upon him. His regrets of the old were well-nigh gone, and when the memory of all the pain and humiliation that the later weeks had brought him passed across his

mind, it no more moved him to any touch of regret or self-reproach, but took only the form of a resentment keen as his self-love, and a dislike for his whole past, whose obverse was a growing but unthankful gladness at the future which lay before him.

Hartley had not quite finished his tea when he heard a knock at the street-door. He did not recognise it as the knock of any one he knew; and there were plenty of callers at the house with whom he had no concern; yet it jarred him. In a minute his landlady came up to his room, and announced "Mr. Leighton"; and, before he could have time to answer, Geoffrey was in the room.

"What do you want here?" Hartley said, flushing.

"I have come to bid you good-bye, Harty."

"I had much rather you had saved yourself the trouble. Our last good-bye would have served me for a century."

"Hartley, you will not leave us in that temper. You may not come back to England again, and we may never see you any more till we die."

“That is the likeliest thing to happen, I should fancy.”

“Then you will not embitter our lives by leaving us without one gleam of the old love?”

Hartley laughed.

“That comes well from you,” he said.

“Why not well from me, Hartley?”

“Good heavens! Are we to go over all the whole cursed story again? Why not well from you, do you ask? Then tell yourself that it is because you played the falsest part to an old love that ever a man played, and you’ll have the reason.”

“God knows that that is not true, Hartley; nor anything but cruelly or blindly false.”

“Good! We are fairly in for it again, then. We shall patch up the old love this way, I suppose.”

“There’s no patching needed on my part, Hartley. I love you better now than ever I did; and I meant nothing but the simplest loyalty to you. But if I wronged you, or if I blundered in doing what seemed to me right, I beg your pardon. I can say no

more. You would forgive any one who was sorry for his fault."

"You may talk for a month, Geoff, and you'll do no good. You know as well as I do that it isn't a question of forgiving. Our notions of playing the traitor are radically different; that's the beginning and end of the matter. *I* think that you played the traitor foully, and I shall think so to the day of my death."

"And that's your last word, Hartley?"

"That's my last word, I believe."

"And you have no kinder word for the old home?"

"I have no word at all for any one. I wish you'd go. We've had enough of this."

"Then, Hartley, God forgive you, for you are very wicked and cruel."

Geoffrey said no more than this, but turned, full of choking pain, and left the room. Hartley rung for the street-door to be opened for his brother, and so the last golden thread that bound him to all his worthier life in the past was broken clean off, as it seemed, for ever.



Geoffrey had told Beata that he would make one more effort to get back his place in Hartley's affection, and to heal the great breach between them ; he had now to tell her the result of his endeavour.

Spite of his hardness, Geoffrey's visit had spoiled Hartley's cheery evening. When his brother was gone, he sat brooding over the old bitter story, with no heart-relentings or misgivings at all in his thoughts. Yet at last, when he got up to finish a few things that he had to do before he went to bed, an impulse, as if from altogether outside his own mind, came across him, and he said, "I believe I will write a line to the old man before I go." He sat down at once and wrote—not a very long letter, and not a very loving one, but a human letter, at all events, in which he told the old man where he was going, and how that he was not very likely to come back again soon, or ever. "You must not expect to hear from me much," he said ; "perhaps I will write some of these days, but I do not promise. I was never much of a correspondent, you know ; and no doubt I



shall have plenty to do and to think about. But you need not bother after me. I dare say I shall fall on my feet; and if not, it won't matter much." Then he sent his love to Aileen, and so the letter ended.

This letter reached Walcote by the same post as that which Geoffrey wrote to Beata, telling her the result of his visit to his brother. It was worth a good deal to her.

The next morning, when Hartley set off upon his journey to Liverpool, he had quite recovered the exuberance of his spirits, and the guard, as he received his "tip" in return for a promise to keep a compartment sacred to the use of the young man, thought that he had not carried a handsomer or a jollier passenger for many a day.

## CHAPTER III.

IT was when Hartley had been away about eighteen months that Geoffrey received a note from Beata, which ran as follows :—

“DEAR GEOFFREY,—Papa was taken ill last night. He wishes very much to see you, if you can come to us.

“Ever your affectionate “BEATA.”

Geoffrey had been expecting some such letter as this for many weeks. Ever since the boys and Robert had left Walcote, eighteen or nineteen months before, the old man had been gradually failing. There was nothing particular the matter with him, but he was dying slowly from old age and loss of heart. A few weeks since he had caught a cold, and after that he drooped more rapidly, and everyone saw that his light was now soon to go out, or to be renewed.

By the first possible train after receiving Beata's letter, Geoffrey set off, and from where the train would carry him no further he posted to Walcote, reaching there by about three in the morning. This was on the third day after the old man's seizure.

For the first ten or twelve hours after he was taken ill, Mr. Spenser suffered a great deal of acute pain, which left him no thought for anything *but* his pain. But after that he grew easier, and then it was that a great longing to see the boys took him.

"I could die happy if I could look on their faces once," he said.

"Shall I write for Geoffrey, dear papa," Beata said; "he could soon get down to you, you know."

"It is a shame to weary him, my dear. He has no strength to spare, poor fellow. And the money even is important. He has to earn every loaf he eats, you know, Beata, thanks to my ignorant folly. Yet it would be a great comfort to see his kind face, just once more."

Beata did not answer; but in a few min-

utes she went to her room, and wrote her note to Geoffrey, taking it in to Mr. Winthrop, that he might send it to be posted for her. Then she went back to her father.

“ I have written to Geoffrey, dear papa,” she said.

“ It was almost a pity, my child. I hope he will get here in time to see me. You can’t write to the other dear boy, can you, Berty? I shall never see *him* again until I meet him in heaven. I hope I shall meet him there. Poor fellow! I wonder what’s become of him? Perhaps he’s gone to heaven, first, dear. He surely would have written to us. I am glad he wrote that one letter, at all events. Poor dear boy! How proud we used to be of him; weren’t we, my child? I never saw a handsomer face. It is all very dark, Berty; I hope it will be lighter presently. I’ll sleep a little now, I think; for I am very tired.”

Then the old man stretched himself out and slept; and through the whole of that day and night, and the next day, he dozed more or less heavily, waking up now and then to

take a little nourishment, but hardly speaking except in answer to some question asked him. Beata scarcely left him the whole time; Aileen sat on the bed, by his side, hour after hour, sleepless, but more silent than the old man himself. Mrs. Winthrop and her husband were in and out constantly, and the servants were only fretted that there was so little for them to do. If love be the best tending, the dying man was well cared for.

Towards midnight of the third day the change came, and about two o'clock, murmuring broken words about his boys and the little one, the old man passed into the spirit-land.

An hour after, Geoffrey arrived. The servants at the door told him that he was too late; and the cloud fell upon his heart as if some great happiness had been snatched suddenly from his grasp. He found Beata sitting in the drawing-room, with Aileen asleep on her knee. He sat down in silence by her side, taking her hand only in his, till the child, half awakened already

by the noise of his arrival, opened her eyes and saw him.

"We have been wanting you so, dear Geoffrey," she said; "poor grandpapa is dead;" and then she turned to Beata, and sobbed upon her bosom.

Geoffrey took her and soothed her, and she comforted herself by his coming; and presently she fell asleep again in his arms.

"She has scarcely been to sleep since papa was taken ill," Beata said; "she begged to stay with us, and I had not the heart to force her."

Beata had shed no tears before her father's death or after; but as she was saying these words about the child, her eyes met Geoffrey's, and the tears poured down like water.

"Where is Mrs. Winthrop?" he asked her, presently.

"She has just gone indoors for a little. She has been with us nearly all the time."

"How was it, dear?" he said.

"Very quiet and peaceful at last. He suffered for a few hours, and then he fell

into a great longing to see you. But later the sleep came, and he slept more or less till he died."

"May I go and see him?"

"Yes; I will come with you."

They laid the child softly on the sofa, and covered her up warm, and went together to where the old man lay.

His face was pale, and thinner than Geoffrey had seen it. His long white hair fell, sleep-like, upon the pillow. His eyes were closed, and his hands lay, half embracing each other, as they had lain when, sleeping, he died. But in the mouth dwelt the utterance of all the beauty and all the peace of death. There was no smile, no pain. The lips were closed as softly as an infant's, and upon them, deeper than any joy or sorrow, rested the shadow of an ineffable calm.

Beata and Geoffrey stood looking at the old man's face, measuring not the moments as they passed. Then, tearless both, he turned and kissed her.

They went back to the drawing-room, and Beata told him fully of all that had

passed. It was a quiet story, without events and without bitterness. When it was told, Geoffrey said to her,

“Now you shall go and lie down for an hour or two, and I will do the same. We have much to think of and to do.



## CHAPTER IV.

THE next day, and for several days, there were, as Geoffrey had said, many things to think of and to do. They need not for the most part be told ; they are among the very common experiences of life. Until the day of the funeral had come, and had passed, they gave no thought to the future ; the duties of the hour and their grief absorbed them. Beata and Aileen followed the old man to the grave ; among their simple people there were none even to wonder that they did so.

Then it became necessary to talk about the future.

“Of the eventual future you can say nothing at present,” Mrs. Winthrop said ; “but about the immediate future there can be no question. You will come to us, my dear.”

“Of course, that doesn’t want talking

about," said Mr. Winthrop. "You had better come in, and leave everything to Geoffrey and me. Our home is yours as long as we have one. You don't want telling how welcome you are."

"No, I don't want telling that," Beata said, "and I shall be very grateful to come to you. But also you must help me to think what I'm to do after you have nursed and comforted me for a little."

"What are you to *do*, child?—why, go on being nursed and comforted to the day of your death, to be sure, if we live so long, and if nobody comes to do the work better."

"Comforted by your love, yes," Beata said, "but not here, and idle. I must get to work, and that as soon as possible."

"To work, child!—what do you mean?" said Mrs. Winthrop.

Beata knew pretty well that she would have this battle to fight, and she of design brought it on now, that her mind might be at rest. So she told them that she was going out to earn a living for herself and Aileen; that nothing else would put her at

peace with herself—that nothing else would satisfy either her conscience or her heart.

Mr. Winthrop was almost angry. The idea that the child of his oldest and dearest friend should turn out into the world to earn a living for herself and his grandchild, while *he* had plenty and to spare, seemed to him one hideous in its absurdity and wrongness.

But Beata had made up her mind nearly two years ago. To find work to do where Aileen could be with her—that was the fashion of her life, as she had conceived it. Till such work could be found, she would stay with the Winthrops, grateful for their care and their love; longer than that she would not stay.

Geoffrey had remained until the funeral day had come and gone, and until the new Rector had been down to visit the place. With him he had made such arrangements as were necessary about the house, and as arose out of the new-comer wishing to purchase the greater part of the furniture. Then he went back to London, and Beata

and Aileen went in to stay with the Winthrops. Mr. Winthrop took in hand all the remaining business matters, and when everything was settled, he found that between three and four hundred pounds remained for Beata. She was glad to find that there was so much, and Mr. Winthrop put nearly the whole of it into the Funds for her.

Then Beata, with Aileen, abode quietly with the Winthrops for a week or two, and their all-abounding kindness, their quiet efforts to cheer her, trespassing never upon her sacred sorrow, their thousand-fold thoughtfulness of her wants, and most loving ingenuity in discovering or making new wants for her, and withal that gentle tenderness, which was the deepest, because the most unconscious, proof of their love, gave her infinite comfort, and soothed and strengthened her for the life that lay before her. "Think," she said to Mr. Winthrop, "if I were not going out to do my duty as soon as possible, all your goodness to me now would be more than half pain ; while, as it is, it is so much comfort and help to

me, that I shall thank you for it till the day of my death." But Mr. Winthrop would think no such thing, or tried hard not to do so ; yet Beata's words moved him so, that they brought the tears to his eyes.

## CHAPTER V.

MEANTIME, the nature of Beata's future work was being much discussed. Teaching seemed the only thing open to her; but teaching under such conditions as would permit her to keep Aileen under her care, it would not be easy to find. Any home that Beata would have liked to enter would not be likely so to take her. So the case was perplexing, and not much light came to reward their many consultations.

Geoffrey, also, was occupied upon the same problem, and under conditions a little more favourable for its solution. He talked to all the people who he thought could help him; and at last, with considerable hesitation, he spoke to his child and her sister. His child answered almost nothing except with her sweet face, but Mary responded at once and warmly.

“It will be a very great pleasure to us if we can help her,” she said. “If I were in the same position myself, I would rather work among the poor, if I could live so.”

“So also would Beata,” he said, “I’m sure. I never thought of it. Is it possible for her to live so?”

“There are schools for the poor where women teach — girls’ schools and infant schools. I daresay a lady would suffer something in teaching in them, but I think there would be more heart-content in working so, and she would have her Saturdays and Sundays and evenings to herself in her own home.”

Geoffrey was so sure that Beata would catch at once at this suggestion, that he would not mention it to her until he had ascertained whether some such work could be found for her to do. To the search for such work he addressed himself, and Mary and Elia helped him with all their zeal.

After a few days (for such posts are not rare), they found something like what they wanted. The school was in one of the

southern suburbs of London, and consisted of about a hundred children, girls and infants together. It did not stand in direct connection with any church, but had been established by some people of the neighbourhood on account of the scarcity of schools for the poor there, and was managed by a committee of ladies. The present governess of the school had just fallen ill, and the children were left in the hands of the only assistant teacher the school could afford, aided by a rotation of volunteer ladies. This was the post that offered itself for Beata. News of it had been brought by one of Mary's friends, who was, indeed, a member of the committee of the school. The salary was £60 a year.

When Geoffrey's letter, communicating the news of this offer, reached Walcote, and Beata showed it to her dear and kind friends, expressing nothing of her own mind upon the matter, Mr. Winthrop laughed it to scorn.

"I thought the boy had more sense," he said. "Teacher of a charity school, indeed!



I suppose you'd have to save up the two-pences to pay your salary, Beata. A magnificent salary it is, too—enough for pin-money—not a penny more. And then the dirt! The London poor are horribly dirty, I'm told. Write back and tell Geoffrey that we think he has lost his wits, and that you'll stay here till the day of your death rather than take to that kind of work."

"I can't tell him that," Beata said, "because I am going thankfully to accept the post."

"You're going to *what*?" said Mr. Winthrop.

"I am going to take the situation," said Beata, putting her hand upon his.

"By all that's good, you shan't, though!" Mr. Winthrop was in a genuine passion this time. "That the child of my dear old friend—parson and gentleman, and descended from parsons and gentlemen for a dozen or fifty generations—should become a pauper teacher on sixty pounds a year, I will not allow. If Geoffrey hasn't the sense to take care of you, I must. You shan't do it, Beata!"

Beata was touched, and not a bit angry at his storming, of course. But she meant to take the post, and she appealed to Mrs. Winthrop with her eyes to help her.

Mrs. Winthrop did not snub her husband this time ; she had too much sympathy with his aversion to Beata's proposed course of action. But she said—

“Gently, my dear. It is Beata's affair, you know. She must do what she thinks right, though I hope that she will give up thinking this to be right. Let us talk of it quietly.”

So they talked of it quietly, or, rather, the women talked of it quietly, while Mr. Winthrop chafed and fumed, and could only be kept from breaking out again and again by a more crafty use of the curb than Mrs. Winthrop was wont to employ in the management of her good-natured husband.

The conversation and its result need not be told. It was settled that Beata was to have her way. The reasons justifying the determination, which at last satisfied Mrs. Winthrop, and against which Mr. Winthrop

in vain endeavoured to find arguments that would hold a cup of water, were as follows : The salary, small as it was, could, with a little help drawn from the means which she already had, be made to support herself and Aileen ; she would be near Geoffrey ; the work would suit her better than any she could imagine, and was likely to get ; it was good, earnest, useful work ; she could have Aileen constantly with her ; she would have much freedom ; her own personal life and her life with Aileen could still continue.

Against this phalanx of reasons Mr. Winthrop charged again and again in vain ; it was but the mercy of the enemy which saved him from being more than pricked with the points of the spears.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE state of Beata's mind when she left her old home and surroundings was as complex as the deep inner history through which she had passed. As simple, still, as a child, to her, though she was but twenty-two, no trace of her childhood seemed to remain. She seemed scarcely able to remember the time when the burden of life was not upon her shoulders. When her father began to grow old, and Aileen came to their care, the burden began, though for a long time its weight seemed to be more than half-pleasure, especially while Geoffrey shared it, as he did, and Hartley scattered upon it the flowers of his loving and light-hearted playfulness. But then came the loss of the property, her father's unconquerable regret and self-reproach thereat, and soon the leaving of the brothers.

When these things happened, the weight of her burden became unmistakeable. But also to it was added another and a still more solemn burden—the burden of her love. Even her old love for Geoffrey had stilled and intensified her nature by its strength and the hold it took upon all the regions of her mind and spirit. When to this was added the knowledge of her great new love for Hartley, the solemnity of her life seemed completed. It would have seemed so, had that love been altogether happy and full of hope; as it was, her life was covered with a *sad* solemnity. One ray only shot through—Hartley might prove himself of the stature of her ideal lord. Gradually this hope faded, and all seemed over. Her life was sadly solemn henceforth. But all was not over. Hartley came back, and there followed the terrible time in which she, all helpless, seemed to be playing the part of the minister of his perdition. Hartley was the worse for her love, estranged, through it, from all who held him dearest, and parted from them, unforgiving

and full of passionate anger. Eighteen months ago all this had come to pass ; and since then, shut in by her quiet and unvarying life, saddened more and more by her father's failing health and heart, her mind had brooded over the complex riddle of her life, and had grown learned in all the subtle mysteries of emotion and pain. For in Beata's nature nothing faded, but all that she had known and felt became embodied in the texture of her nature. And then, at last, came death to seal and close all, and to send her forth, laden with the sad wisdom of the past, to deal with a strange future, with which the past had neither relation nor sympathy.

The last night of her stay in the old place, in no morbid or self-indulgent mood, Beata sat up to think. The past was closing ; she would take one long look at it before it went. She would be the stronger for doing so. And the past, obedient to her deep desire, came back slowly in its order. She saw herself and her life grow before her eyes. She stood outside her own nature,

and comprehended, better than she had ever done before, its workings. The past seemed a whole, and she herself no longer its chance product. She looked back, understandingly, as a dying man may look. Things "worked together," to her eyes. The good was not wholly apparent; but the unity of her life interpreted somewhat its sadness, and she was strengthened. The future, for which she was all unfit, lay before her; her unfitness was no affair of hers; that it lay before her, even as the past once had done, was all her concern. Her night of thought strengthened Beata more than a night of sleep would have done.

In the morning, taking with her some few memorials of her old life, a few fresh-sprung blades of grass from her father's grave, and, dearest of all, the child, she set off. Neither she nor Mrs. Winthrop uttered any words of parting, but bade farewell in a long and clinging embrace. Mr. Winthrop went with them to the coach, and by a sudden resolve got up outside, and took them to where they joined the train. There he left them,



plainly crying, dear old man as he was, while Beata had more trouble to master her tears than she had had through all this time of sorrow.

"I don't know how far you will carry this folly, Beata," he said. "Will you let us know if you are *hungry*?"

"Yes," she said, smiling and half-sobbing together, "I will let you know that."

"It is very cruel of you," he said; "we have no child to cheer us. We would have thanked you every day if you would have stayed. Geoffrey I will never forgive."

"No," she said; "you love him too well to have to forgive him. I will take your love to him. You cannot think that I wanted to leave you, for the leaving sake. But it is right. God bless you for all your goodness to me!" And then she held out her face to kiss him, as she had not done since she was a child.

For days before the leaving, Mr. Winthrop and Aileen had, except at night, scarcely been parted. You could see the tenderness of the man to the child showing out through



the bend of his figure towards her as they walked, through their hand-grip, through the yearning of his full ruddy face, through his lover-like devotion to all she said and wished. And Aileen clung to him, as understanding instinctively all the affection which he had so few words to aptly express.

“You *will* come and see us soon, won’t you?” she said, when he kissed her as the train was about to start.

“Yes, my precious linnet, I will, if I live. I don’t know what I shall do without my bird. There’ll be no more chirruping in the old man’s heart for many a day.”

“We shall love you all the same, you know ; and I will sing the linnet song every day to think of you,” Aileen said ; and then the train moved on.

Then came the long railway journey. Beata and Aileen were alone, for Mr. Winthrop had spoken to the guard, and he had locked them in, promising that they should remain undisturbed. The train was an express-train, and as they rushed along, Aileen nestled into Beata, and Beata put her arms

round the little one, and drew her head into her bosom, and felt unspeakably thankful that they, at all events, were not to be parted. So she sat ; and the motion, and the steady noise and rhythm of the engine, lulled her off into half-dreamy thought, and she was poised above the sense of time ; and when the first stage of the journey had been accomplished, she scarcely knew whether hours or quarters had been occupied in its making. Then the guard came to them to ask after their wants, of which they had none ; and the train started again. For a little Aileen roused herself, and they began to talk quietly together. But presently the child dropped off to sleep again, and Beata was left to her own thoughts till, when it was quite dark, the journey came to an end, and, in a moment, Geoffrey's face was at the window of the carriage. Aileen saw him instantly.

“ Oh ! dear Geoffrey,” she said, springing to him ; “ I am so glad ! ”

Then the guard came and unlocked the door, and helped them carefully out, and

thought not of a "tip," partly because that had been given him at the other end, and partly because he had been won by the quiet sadness and sweetness of his charge.

Geoffrey took Aileen into his arms, and the child clung to his neck while he carried her to the cab which he had waiting for them. Then he went back for Beata.

"My darling," he said, "I don't know whether I am more sorry or more thankful to welcome you."

"Not sorry at all," she said; "I am very thankful."

They drove off through the desolate wilderness of London by night, and Aileen scarcely liked to look out of the windows of the cab on to the gaunt, dark houses to the right and the left, and the glare of the street-lamps awed her, and the besotted shout of a drunkard, followed by the half-shriek, half-laugh of a woman, made her blood run cold, and she hid her face, almost sobbing with terror, in Geoffrey's breast. And presently they crossed one of the bridges, and the river under the darkness awed even

Beata. Beyond a few questions and answers about their journey, they did not talk much; but Geoffrey held Beata's hand, and, for his own sake, felt more deeply glad than he had been since he left his home.

So they reached the lodgings that had been found for them. They were in the house of a woman known to the lady who had told Geoffrey's friends of the school. The house was near to the school, and about a mile from that in which Geoffrey had his rooms.

The woman of the house was expecting them at this time, and she had a fire ready for them, and hot water in case they would like some tea. Geoffrey, without asking Beata, said that they would. There was everything in the house ready for their tea and their breakfast; Geoffrey had provided it. Beata smiled when she saw.

"I am an experienced housekeeper," Geoffrey said.

So they had some tea, and were refreshed. Then they could look about them, at their new home. The rooms were small; a back

and a front room, with a door between. The back room was their bed-room. It was heartsome, though so small and not richly furnished. The bed was pleasant, and of snowy whiteness. The carpet which covered the floor was cheery, and the window was daintily curtained. An illumination or two hung upon the walls, and one over the fire-place, and looking down upon the bed, ran as follows:—

“ Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,  
It hath not been my use to pray  
With moving lips or bended knees ;  
But silently, by slow degrees,  
My spirit I to Love compose,  
In humble trust mine eyelids close  
With reverential resignation ;  
No wish conceived, no thought exprest,  
Only a sense of supplication ;  
A sense o’er all my soul imprest  
That I am weak, yet not unblest,  
Since in me, round me, everywhere,  
Eternal Strength and Wisdom are.”

“ I don’t know those lines,” Beata said, pointing to this. “ They are very beautiful.”

“ Yes, they are Coleridge’s. The illumination is mine ; but I thought I would lend it you for a night or two, as a welcome. It is

much that I am very *glad* to lend it you. My child did it for me, after I had pointed out to her the beauty of the lines, as a birthday present. It looks down upon me every night while I sleep. I shall not be lonely without it, only because I shall be thinking that it is a comfort and welcome to you."

Beata did not thank him; she *never* thanked him for his most loving acts.

They went back into the sitting-room. Geoffrey felt that he had a right himself to show to his dear ones their new home throughout, for he had partly made it what it was. Henceforth it was theirs, not his.

The sitting-room was pleasant, too. It was clean and cheery. There were some flowers about it, and two or three engravings that would *not* have to be taken away, hung upon the walls. Beata knew who had put them also in their places.

Then the landlady came in. She was a quiet, simple, kindly woman, who, happily, had *not* seen better days.

"It is all very nice," Beata said; "I think we shall soon love our new home."

“It’s my wish to make you comfortable, ma’am. It’s not what you’ve been used to, I know ; but it’s the best I have ; and I hope your brother will come in very often to cheer you up a bit.”

“He is not my brother,” said Beata.

“No, I know, ma’am ; but it’s just the same, I think.”

This was the fruit of Geoffrey’s guileless craft. He could not be kept away from Beata, or hampered in his comings and goings ; yet, still more, he could not have Beata made a shade uncomfortable. So he had told to Beata’s landlady the story of their past life in outline, and by that means had gained for himself free entrance to Beata, under the protection of *her* knowledge and sympathy.

## CHAPTER VII.

BEATA came to London on Friday. On the Monday following she was to begin her new duties. But on Saturday she was surprised by the announcement of some visitors. Two ladies they were, the woman of the house, Mrs. Kybert, said, and she gave Beata their card. Beata saw at a glance who her visitors were, and she went out into the little passage to fetch them in.

“We hoped you would forgive us,” Mary said, “if we came to welcome you to your new home. You don’t know us, but we seem to know you very well.”

“I know you quite well,” Beata said.

There was a little pause.

“It is very kind of you to come,” Beata said again.

“We wanted to do so ; but we were half afraid. I am glad you do not mind.”



Then they might have gone away, and still have left much heart brightness behind them. But they did not want to go.

"We know all about you from your brother," Mary said; "you must be very glad to come so near him."

"Yes, I am very glad," Beata said.

"He must be very much to you. Even we owe him a great deal, though he only comes to us for an hour, now and then. But his visits have made a different thing of our life. Books and thought mean so much more to us than ever they did before."

"You have done as much for him," Beata said, "in another way; his visits to you have been his greatest pleasure."

"Have they?" Mary said; "I am very glad. He seems sad by nature; and his life must be lonely; it will be less so now that you have come."

Mary spoke quietly, though her words were full of heart. Elia did not speak at all. But as she said that Geoffrey's visits to them had been his greatest pleasure, Beata glanced at Elia's face, and found there

an expression whose meaning she knew.

While they were talking, Aileen had crept up to Elia, and Elia put her arm round the child, and they looked into each other's faces.

"Do you know Geoffrey?" Aileen said, hearing the talk.

"Yes," Elia said, smiling softly; she had never heard her dear teacher called "Geoffrey" before; it made her heart leap a little, and seemed to bring him nearer to her.

"How do you know him?"

"He teaches me, sometimes."

"Do you have lessons? Why, you're grown up."

"Am I? But I have lessons, and I like them."

"Yes; I should like Geoffrey's lessons. But so I do like Beata's. I am going to school next week, and Beata says that I shall teach some of the very tiny children. Won't that be funny?"

Elia laughed softly. Beata caught the tone of the "soft contralto laugh, breaking into the tenderest ripple of treble you ever heard."

Aileen kept looking into the sweet face.

"I like you," she said; "I want to kiss you. Does Geoffrey like teaching you?"

Elia kissed the child tenderly, and Beata caught again upon her face the expression whose meaning she knew.

"I hope you will like your school-life," Mary said to Beata; "may we come and see you in it sometimes?"

Beata said how glad she should be to have them, and then presently they went. Elia lingered for a moment as they were leaving. Beata, gratefully understanding, kissed her.

Then Mary turned back and kissed Beata, too, saying,

"I did not know whether we might kiss you the first time; but we feel like old friends to you."

So they left, and Beata, who wept but little, cried for half an hour soft comforting tears, that were as the rain of heaven's tender pity upon the parched and weary heart.

In the evening, Geoffrey came in for a few minutes.

"I have had visitors," Beata said.

"Visitors? Who, I wonder?"

Beata showed him the cards.

"Indeed! How very nice of them! They never said that they were coming. And you saw my child?"

"Yes; and heard the laugh. She kissed me when she left; they both kissed me."

Geoffrey's face softened, and he sat, thinking, until Aileen grew impatient at his absence. He did not ask any more about the visits then, but talked only of Beata and Aileen, and their wants and their comforts.

"I will come and take you to church in the morning," he said, as he left them; "be ready by ten."

So in the morning they were ready by ten, and Geoffrey came. He, a two years' sojourner in the great wilderness that can be so desolate to a stranger traveller, had become learned in a few of its shady nooks and quiet resting-places. This morning he took them to one of these. It was a sunny spring morning, and through roads which had not quite forgotten to be lanes since the

great city began to stretch its huge hideousness over their greenness, a half an hour's walk brought them to a church that lay, nest-like, among a fragrant cluster of lime-trees. The beautiful green, and the church gleaming daintily from among it, was good for the eyes to see; and when they entered, the inside of the building was not less pleasant than the out. The service began. A quiet and reverent reader: soft and simple music, abundant, but so easy that the most unlearned could follow; carefully done, but so unobtrusive in its excellence, that you thought but of its quietness: a short and earnest sermon, striking the chord of one tone of the full harmony of the Christian life: the administration of the Holy Communion,—these made up a service that fell like the soft beauty of a summer evening upon their spirits, and made them understand better what the worship of God can be to the heart of man. Then they walked home through the roads which had not quite forgotten to be lanes; and Geoffrey had his dinner with Beata and Aileen, and

after dinner they chatted quietly of things past and to come, and then he read to them, and in such wise the day passed, and left them, having done the work of a true Sabbath upon their hearts. They had never once thought of the *duty* of keeping the Sabbath holy; but they had rested upon the day, and had sanctified it.

“I did not know,” Beata said, while they were chatting, “that you were on such terms with your child as that she should give you a birthday present?”

“No, I am not,” Geoffrey said; “but it happened that I had praised her illuminating, in which she was a beginner; and I said one day that those lines seemed to me just to express the right thoughts to fall asleep with; and then my birth-day was coming, and they, by chance, knew of it, and on the day itself I went to one of my lessons, and so my child, in her sweet, shy way, asked if I would have that in my room. It was very badly done, she said, but it was the best she could do; and I, though it was so badly done, took it.”

“I see,” said Beata.

“But the year before they did me, if possible, a still greater grace. I wanted my child to have a Greek Testament with better notes than those of the one she had. I would get it for her, I said. I got it, and took it, not quite accidentally, upon my birthday, putting her name and the date inside. I had not much hope but that I should be paid for it. But I was not. The uncle never spoke of it. I was so very grateful. I do not think they even spoke of it to each other. But they understood my wish, and let me have it.”

Beata's old awe at this child's name grew strong upon her, she could not tell why. A shadow seemed always to fall upon her when she thought of Geoffrey and his child together. But whether it was the shadow of a great joy or a great sorrow she could not tell.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ON Monday morning Beata set off with Aileen for the school. She went a little late on purpose, that the work of the day might have commenced. The children rose as she entered; they took her for a visitor, which the assistant-teacher, not knowing her, also did. Beata went up to her, and told her who she was, and begged her to go on as she had been doing, that she might get to understand a little the old working of the school, before she entered upon her duties. This the assistant-teacher, not ill content, and with a little more demonstration of energy and authority than usual, did. So Beata was free to observe.

The room was a square, plain room, with walls of ancient white-wash, and windows curtained with dust. The roof was an open roof of slates and rafters. In the middle of



the room were a number of long parallel desks, with forms of unvarying height, though the sitters thereupon ranged from four to fourteen years of age. On these forms the whole school sat when Beata and Aileen entered; they had just had the Scripture-reading and prayers, with which the work of the day opened. So the first thing they saw was one that astonished Aileen very much. While the assistant teacher, whose name was Miss Wiltshire, spoke to Beata, the school had broken into a buzz, which had to be silenced by the ringing of a bell. The buzz having ceased, Miss Wiltshire said,

“ATTENTION!”

upon which nothing followed. She then said,

“TURN!”

and suddenly all the children, except the very small ones who couldn't, revolved, sharply, a quarter circle upon their axes, and waited, briskly attentive, with one hand upon each of the desks between which they were, for what was to follow. What would it be, Aileen wondered, awed before

an unguessable mystery. Presently it came ;

“ FRONT ! ”

said Miss Wiltshire, and the *turn* was as though it had never been. The thing was to start *ab ovo*.

“ TURN ! ”

said Miss Wiltshire again, and again

“ FRONT.”

Aileen began to think that this must be “lessons,” and thought that, so, giving lessons would be even funnier than she had imagined. But after the next *turn* came a new movement ;

“ OUT ! ”

said Miss Wiltshire, and then came a confused jostle and scramble as of a thousand dogs at play.

“ FRONT ! ”

said Miss Wiltshire, and the whole school faced her, standing. Then followed another series of *turns* and *fronts*, and at last all marched off to take their places, in classes, round the room.

Each class stood in a semi-circle, marked by a line chalked upon the floor. In the centre of each class was a monitor (or monitress, as Miss Wiltshire more accurate-

ly expressed it), one of the most important of whose duties it was to keep her class toeing the line. Miss Wiltshire sat at her desk, or now and then made the round of the room, keeping order. From the moment when the command "Go on" was issued, there commenced a buzz, waxing gradually into a roar, until the tinkle of Miss Wiltshire's bell signalled silence, and her "too much noise; go on lower," set the buzz going again, to wax once more into a roar, with that unvarying regularity which marks all the great operations of nature and of machinery.

All this was nearly as new to Beata as to Aileen, and it impressed her equally. Before she came, she had thought of the hundred children to be taught by herself and an assistant teacher with a vague wonder as to what was to be done with them. Miss Wiltshire appeared to have no such difficulty; she seemed as if she could have managed a thousand with equal ease. But Beata thus far did not see what had been accomplished when the managing was done. She went round the room, stopping beside one class after another, but, everywhere, toeing the

line seemed to be the dominant idea. Miss Wiltshire herself every now and then bustled into a class, but her first injunction always was "Stand round ; toe the line," and as soon as she had seen this fairly accomplished, she bustled out again, leaving to the monitor the trivial duty of teaching whatever had to be taught. In such fashion the morning passed. That something was taught was clear ; for the children knew something ; but by what magic the thing was done Beata could not conceive, nor could she imagine herself able to work the mysteries of such magic. She also had to begin *ab ovo*.

But as she sat at home in the evening, alone—for Geoffrey could not come—that beginning, *ab ovo*, seemed to her no light matter. The glory and meaning of her new work paled before her, and the quiet Walcote nest seemed, in looking back upon it, most peaceable and inviting. A hundred and one impersonal human beings dizzied her eyes, and a life of *turn, front, toe the line*, with Miss Wiltshire ever on her skirts, seemed to lie in dead and heart-breaking

monotony before her. She did not regret that she had left her home, because her duty in the matter was clear, but her hope of satisfaction in her new life was faded ; there was nothing here to fill her heart, she thought.

But in the morning she was braver. A life of *turn, front, toe the line*, would certainly be heart-breaking ; but perhaps there might be an alternative. She would try.

So this morning she set off in good time with Aileen, and was there before school commenced, and, indeed, before the children had assembled. As they came in, she spoke to one and another, not governess-talk, but just some passing word natural from a woman to a child. The children looked surprised, and put their heads together to talk about it. Then presently it was time to begin. Beata found the place she would read in the Bible, and then waited, not ringing the bell. The buzzing continued, and Miss Wiltshire showed signs of impatience. But Beata waited still, and after a little some children saw her waiting,

and left off talking. The lull was catching, and soon there was perfect silence. Then Beata began to read, but as she began, a noise of feet began too. So she stopped again till there was silence, and then said—

“I want you always to notice when I am ready to begin, and to be quiet for me, and while I am reading you must always be quite still.”

After that, Beata finished her reading without interruption, and the prayers too; and then came the time for *turn, front, &c.* But instead of these, Beata said,

“Now get out from your seats quietly, and go to your classes.” The children got out from their seats, and went to their classes, but the quietness, it must be confessed, was conspicuous only by its absence. Miss Wiltshire looked contemptuously triumphant.

After waiting some little time for silence, Beata said, “Now I think you must come back and go to your classes again. I asked you to do it quietly, and you did not.”

So the children came back to their seats, and went again to their classes, this time with only a moderate amount of noise, and

the reign of the monitors began. But then Miss Wiltshire came up to Beata and said—

“Hadn’t they better go to the next lesson?—all the time for the first is gone.”

Beata survived Miss Wiltshire’s cutting rebuke, and held on her way. As it was clear that she could not play monitor to a dozen classes at once, she began piece-meal, and brought together two or three of the youngest classes into a big class for herself. The little ones found this change exciting, and buzzed accordingly, while all the other classes, as if struck by a sudden fiat of oblivion, simultaneously forgot the natural affinity between toes and lines. It was all that Miss Wiltshire could do to restrain her hands from the bell, and her tongue from a shrill and indignant protest on behalf of that great, but insulted, first principle of order.

However, Beata had got her big small class. Then she went up to the desk, and the school became silent in expectation of her words.

“Now,” she said, “I want all the elder classes to go on steadily and quietly with their work, while I teach the little ones.” And then, turning to Miss Wiltshire, she



said—"Will you kindly help me by moving about among the elder classes, and seeing that the work is going on properly?"

Miss Wiltshire went off with a resigned air, and Beata began her teaching.

It is probable that Beata taught upon no definite method, and accomplished no very definite results in this first lesson. But three things she did: she interested the class, she interested Aileen, and she interested herself. It was a rather disorderly lesson, for, as a young teacher, she had more the art of exciting than the art of restraining. A dozen small voices might sometimes be heard at once adventuring some wild answer to a question that had caught hold of them. There was a good deal of laughing, too, about the questions that were asked and the answers that were given. But there were not many listless faces, nor was there any disorder save the disorder of too enthusiastic work. When the lesson came to an end, the little ones were all sorry, which was rather a new experience for them.

This was the fashion of Beata's second day



at school—a day of hideous revolution and resulting anarchy, as Miss Wiltshire thought ; but a day of life, no less. The children felt the influence of a fresh human heart and mind, and, as always, responded to it. Even that day Beata felt one or two of them, though never so shyly, attach themselves to her. She did not aim to make changes ; she did not aim at anything in particular as yet. But she instinctively rebelled against dead routine, and knew that she could only work at all if the children and she might *live* to each other.

Before this week was over, Miss Wiltshire's sufferings were beyond her powers of endurance. Her feelings as a trained teacher, of certified qualifications in all variations of *turn, front, toe the line*, had received a mortal wound. She feared that Miss Spenser's methods and her own were so different that they could not work together. She begged, therefore, to resign, and at once, if that might be. Beata bore the loss, thankfully ; the next week she and Aileen, aged eight, were the sole teachers.

## CHAPTER IX.

A PART from their school-work, the life of Beata and Aileen did not, at first sight, seem very eventful. Before work began, came their breakfast-time, and their quiet, morning prayer together, which they both enjoyed so much. The fashion of it was this: First, Aileen seated on Beata's knee, they would have the Bible before them, and in a low voice, just loud enough for themselves to hear, they would read alternate verses of the chapter or the psalm they had chosen for their morning portion. Then they would kneel down together, and Aileen's hand in hers, Beata would read the prayers they had brought with them from their Walcote home. Then they kissed, and the morning was consecrated.

At half-past twelve they came home to an early dinner. At five the work of the day

was done. This, till tea had refreshed her, was Beata's saddest time. She was tired; the interests of the day were over; the home-comforts that, after all, soften the saddest life, were not to be had; the outlook was one of dull monotony, with no break of brightness, no hope of an intensity, even of pain, such as the past had known. The rest and refreshment of tea-time changed nothing, yet it changed the seeming of all. With a hundred young souls in her hands, and the bright-hearted Aileen with her night and day, life could hardly be monotonous, she said. And indeed, it is not monotony of which any of us complain. At her saddest times Beata's life seemed *empty*, and that was her grief; a life filled may be as monotonous as it pleases. At her less sad times Beata found that a life is not often empty where the nature is faithful, however sad it may be.

More often than not, Geoffrey came in to tea. It was the time he could best spare from his work. He frequently brought with him some contribution to the repast; they

were poor people, and must not sponge on each other, he said. With Beata's income, this, of course, was literally true. She did not resist him ; she knew the price she would have had to pay for victory.

Geoffrey would come in to tea, and Aileen would be on the look-out for him till he came, and would generally be the one to open the house door for him. A chirrup of welcome, a seizure of the hand to lead him into the room, a little hinderful assistance in the taking off of his coat, a formal installation in his appointed seat—these made the daily routine. Beata's welcome was quieter, yet she rose from her seat, always, as you instinctively do when you are very glad to see anyone, however far from ceremony your relations may be. As tea progressed, and Geoffrey's nonsense talk with Aileen, and his light loving talk with Beata, went on, all their hearts, and especially Beata's heart, would brighten, and life, though never otherwise than sad at bottom, would seem far from empty, and touched with a brightness that did not fade until sleep fell upon sadness and brightness alike.

A little while after her arrival, in one of the letters which she had from Mrs. Winthrop, Beata read, "I have sent you a piece of music, which I hope you will like. It comes with my old man's love, and mine." Beata was pleased, of course, though she smiled at her dear friends fancying that she could have any particular use for pieces of music in her homely lodgings that would have lost their wits at the very thought of a piano. However, she was not going to spoil their "pleasures of imagination." The music would come by the next post, she supposed. It did not come, but on the afternoon of the second day, when she came home from school, lo! the ghost of her own old piano occupied one side of the little sitting-room.

In a minute, Mrs. Kybert, like another ghost, entered the room, and said oracularly—

"It came while you were out."

Beata heard, but understood not, and waited for the oracle to expound itself.

"It was in a great packing-case. I said

it couldn't be for here, but the man said as it was, and showed me my name and yours, miss, on the direction. They said that their master had had a letter about it, so they was sure. So I let them bring it in, and undo the case, which they did; and there it is, and beautiful it looks, to be sure, and there's your name on the pianner itself, leastways on a card, with Mr. and Mrs. Windthorpe's love."

If the letter which Beata wrote back to "Mr. and Mrs. Windthorpe" did not appear to them the most ungrateful and abusive address they had ever received, their previous experiences must have been singularly unfortunate, or they must have been blessed with skins of extraordinary thickness. The one consoling fact was that Beata did not return the piano, but sent, instead, for all her old music, which they had taken charge of for her.

After this, whenever Geoffrey stayed the whole evening with them, they were sure to spend it, or a large part of it, over the music. Beata had her old pieces and songs, and

these were numerous enough to make up for the scarcity of new ones. It would be hard to say that the pleasure of these evenings was without alloy. To Aileen they *were* unalloyed pleasure ; to Geoffrey there was considerable admixture ; to Beata the admixture was very large indeed. Yet perhaps the alloy was that after which she most hungered. Why do we go to the graves that cover our bereavement ? Do we find pleasure there ? *Would* we find pleasure there, if we could ? Yet would we stay away ? There are no spots to which we so turn, and after which we so hunger, as those that cover our pain. We court that "sorrow's crown of sorrow," as if it were a diadem of happiness.

Beata's piano and her heap of old music were the grave of unnumbered memories, which now were nearly all pain. Each time she turned over the songs, she seemed to read anew the history of her sorrow ; while from the notes of one after another rung out Hartley's voice full of bitter though unjust reproach.



The music over, and Geoffery gone, Beata would often take up again the thoughts that the music had awakened, and link the future to the past. For she was not one who would attempt to cure the pain of love by forgetting love. Had Hartley given himself to another, she would have felt that true loyalty forbade her to cherish him even in thought. As it was, he was no one's; therefore, he was hers. She loved him, and he knew it. Even if he hated her for that which her duty had compelled her to do, that made no difference. It was not his love, but her own, that made him hers. Though he was not her lord, he was her love; and to him, unless this became a disloyalty, she would be faithful to death.

So through the eighteen months, and now, Beata's work had been, and was, to cherish love, and be strong—not to be strong in forgetting love. And so through the eighteen months, and now, it had been, and was, a constant sorrow to her that she could know nothing about him. She and Geoffrey would sometimes talk a little about



him ; but there was not much use in this. Where both were so ignorant, words seemed emptier than thought. Therefore it was through the music that they most communed upon their common sorrow.

## CHAPTER X.

THE history of Geoffrey's life during the eighteen months between the leaving of Hartley and the death of Mr. Spenser, was not marked by any conspicuous outer events. He continued the teaching of his child, adding to that enough more teaching to give him means sufficient for his simple living. The greater part of his time was given to the book of which mention has been made, and to another of a different character, which he had taken in hand. He felt very glad that he had no need to hurry these for the bread that they should bring him; he had bread enough, and so he might work at his books reverently, and put into them the best that was in him.

Of these two books, the first was now ready for the press, and it had been accepted by the publishers who published his for-

mer work. That former work had lately reached a second edition, and thus Geoffrey's success, inconspicuous as it was, was enough to content him for the present.

Once or twice he had been tempted to give a public lecture. He had never done it for money, nor ever but upon a subject that deeply interested him. The fact would scarcely be worth recording here at all, but that at one which at this time he gave, his child and her sister, Beata and Aileen, were present.

This lecture was given on a Saturday afternoon, when Beata was free from her duties at school. The four girls sat together, and, at Aileen's dictation, in a spot where he must pass them to go to his place.

When Geoffrey came in, he stopped to shake hands with them. As Elia gave him *her* hand, Beata saw in her face that look, half shy, but altogether confiding, of which Geoffrey had spoken in his letter; while the little tremor of pleasure which lingered about her mouth after he had turned from her, filled Beata's heart with a yearning to

kiss the sweet face whose very happiness made her sigh.

While the lecture was being given, Beata could not keep from watching this sweet child's face. Elia had a way, when she was quiet, of sitting with her hands lightly folded, and her head bent a little. So she sat when the lecture began. As Beata was, she could see the soft line of her face from forehead to ear, and the sweet meekness of her mouth, that made her face what it was. As the lecture advanced, and the thought warmed, her look quickened, and varied with every shade of feeling that ran through Geoffrey's words; and once or twice, at the mirthful parts, came the laugh that Beata could not determine to think the brightest, or the most pathetic, she had ever heard in her life.

When the lecture was over, Geoffrey came and shook hands with them again, and went away, for he had another appointment. Mary and Elia walked with the other two towards their home, and at the door Mary said,

“Uncle and aunt are out to dinner to-

day, so we had ours at lunch-time, that we might be free."

"Then will you stop and have some tea with me?" Beata said.

"May we?" Mary said; "we should like to do so very much."

They stayed; and Beata made no apologies for the simplicity of her entertainment. They talked of many things—of their interests and the manner of their lives, and then of Geoffrey. This last was a fertile topic, and the four parted into pairs the more worthily to discuss it.

"Did you like the lecture?" Aileen said to Elia.

"Yes, of course," Elia said, smiling.

"Does Geoffrey—you know who I mean by Geoffrey?"

Elia nodded.

"Do you call him 'Geoffrey?'"

"No."

"What do you call him?"

"I call him Mr. Leighton."

"How funny! Why don't you call him 'Geoffrey?'"

Elia smiled, as if she would not object to calling him Geoffrey, if she had the right to do so.

“Do you know what he calls *you*?” Aileen said.

“No,” said Elia, gravely.

“He calls you his child. I heard him say so to Beata.”

Elia’s heart leaped at that, and her sweet face, which not often coloured, flamed up for a moment, and then became quite pale.

“Are you angry with me?” Aileen said.  
“Did I say something to make you angry?”

“No,” Elia said, softly.

“I do love you so,” Aileen said. “Isn’t it funny, because you are not my sister, or Geoffrey, or anything, are you? Do you love me?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Will you always, do you think? I shall love you all my life.”

## CHAPTER XI.

GEOFFREY'S dear ones of the old time, and his dear ones of the new time, had soon found each other's hearts, and had early snatched a pleasure such as had never fallen to his lot. He, however, by no means begrudged them, for by their nearness to each other his own nearness to his child seemed increased; and, even if it were not so, his cup was full enough to make him content. For the teaching of his child was ever a growing satisfaction and joy to him. The happiness of it and the sanctity of it coloured all his life. As the months went on, he found that her mind and character were more and more taking root upon his, and the fact made him exult with a most trembling humility. The books he praised he was sure to find about the room soon after; he felt her to be moved most by all such

thoughts as most moved him ; the things that he best loved to teach were those that she best loved to learn ; his favourite modes of expression were revealed to himself by finding them repeated in her writings for him. She was his child in the deepest sense of the word ; and while she was no mere imitator of him, her heart and mind fused and shaped themselves by the vital heat, and the form, of his.

Geoffrey's intercourse with the sisters never went beyond his professional visits, and the times he lingered behind to read to them, or to talk with them a little. Their conversations about matters personal were few and brief, though, to be sure, as conversations upon such matters between such persons are apt to be, they were pregnant. Before he had spoken half a dozen times in briefest terms to them about Beata, they seemed to know her, and all that she had been to him. To a stranger they could have given no veriest sketch of his life, yet they felt to know his life well, by the pith and the key of it. Their knowledge of him



was idealistic, having, therefore, all the scantiness and the depth that such knowledge has.

Of the uncle and the aunt, Geoffrey had continued to see but little. Now and then the aunt would put in an appearance during a lesson, keeping Geoffrey, during her stay, in a state of hideous fear lest, from her exceeding limpness, she should collapse before his eyes into a shapeless and undistinguishable mass. Now and then the uncle would arrest Geoffrey at his study door, to make blandly supercilious inquiries as to the progress of his pupil. At such times Geoffrey would go away, half convinced that he (himself, that is) was but a disguised fiend, after all, and that his latent capacity for hating might some day burst out in the frantic murder of some innocent woman or child, perhaps; and for weeks *after* such times he would hurry past the study-door, behind which, possibly, the ogre lay, ready to pounce upon him.

When Beata came to London, Geoffrey was not much the gainer, as far as oppor-

tunities of seeing Mary and Elia went. It was, of course, a point of obvious rightness to Beata and himself, that he should make no sort of attempt to meet them at her rooms. But once, kind fortune was very good to him. He had lent to the sisters a book, which he wanted to have back the next day, and they had promised that it should come to him. The next day, as they happened to be going in the direction of his house, they took it with them to leave it at his door. When they reached his door, a sudden heavy shower was just beginning. Beata and Aileen chanced to be with him, detained also by the coming shower. So Geoffrey ventured to go out to them, and said, "Will you not come in till the shower is over? My sister and Aileen are here."

He was almost as nervous as a girl, for his heart was always obeisant to them; and now he hoped very much that they would come in and sanctify his room. As he spoke, Mary looked at the weather again, to see if it were necessary to accept his invitation; while Elia made a little impulsive move-

ment as if to enter, but stopped herself before any eye but Geoffrey's had seen it. She had often longed to see the room where he spent so many of his hours and worked.

The rain poured down, and they entered. Geoffrey had just seats enough for them all, and no more, even though he himself stood while they stayed. One arm-chair he had, where he rested and did all his best thinking. It was not quite accident that determined that Elia should have this chair. She sat in it, and held his book in her hand, and he stooped down over her to show her some passage that she had not been able to find. He had never been so near her before, and the simple grace of her sweet presence, and the sacred sense of her most meek and child-like beauty, moved him so, that his hand trembled as he turned over the leaves. And then, when he had found the place and shown her the passage, she looked up into his face with that shy, confiding manner entirely her own, which made his heart yearn so towards her, that it seemed to him that once to reverently kiss her dear

mouth and to die would be the fruition of life. And the yearning was so strong upon him that it shone out through his face, and her eyes fell before his, as many a time they had done at the utterance of some deepest and most moving thought, but as they had never before done at any thought or feeling personal between those two. And now she did not interpret, any more than he desired to express, the yearning, but her heart was moved in response to an emotion in his, that, whatever it might be, was as full of sanctity and reverence as the emotions of his that moved her so always were.

## CHAPTER XII.

A LETTER from Beata Spenser to Mrs. Winthrop:—

“That you should want to know all about me and my school and my doings is just a part of that dear maternity which you have held over me for so many years. I feel lonely enough sometimes, as it is; how I should feel if I had not your sure love always to fall back upon, I do not know.

“I have been here a month now, and feel no longer a stranger to the place and the work. I have grown quite wise in waiting through the sad times for the bright times to come. I know so well the difference between before tea and after tea. I really think that I shall soon learn to live an average life by remembering and discounting the times that are not in the times that are.

“And deeper than varying moods my work begins to interest me and comfort me very much. There is so much to do for these little ones that even I can do ; and they are, on the whole, so gladly willing to have it done, that I cannot but be interested and comforted.

“My children are poor, and they are not always as clean as I could wish. If you could see some of their sweet little faces, you would think what a pity it was that that they should be dirty, and I thought so too. So I set about trying to make cleanliness the custom of the school, and I was astonished to find how catching this sort of thing is. But, alas ! as my children grew clean, my school-room began to look more and more dirty. On an early committee-day, therefore, I begged my ladies to have the walls whitewashed, which, after long demur, they consented to do. I had had a whole string of requests to proffer, but my daring was exhausted in this first battle. Accordingly, I myself engaged a man to clean the windows. (‘What ! out of sixty

pounds a year!' cries your dear old bully; only you won't tell him about this, for fear he should come and carry me off bodily, and so cause the five shillings to have been spent for nothing.) Then the desks were very dirty. I proposed, therefore, to some of the elder girls that we should spend our next Saturday holiday in cleaning them. To this they of course agreed; and fine fun we had over it, and very sacred in their eyes was the cleanliness of the desks every day after, I can tell you.

"Well, so far we were clean; and now we had to begin to be beautiful. First, I bought a few engravings (not out of the sixty pounds a year), and I begged some more (you may make me a present, if you like, and the dear old bully may join with you). Then we got some growing plants, and placed them in the windows. And then, as often as we could, we placed fresh-cut flowers about the room, to make each day look beautiful. My desk does not often fail to be well supplied by the children, and

out of this grows a little story that I must tell you. Among the dearest of my little boys is one Freddy Williams. Freddy is six years old, and as shy and as loving as a bird. Freddy had never brought me any flowers, for the reason that his mother had no garden, and no plants in pots. But one day he brought me one, and came up with it smiling and blushing so deliciously, that I could scarcely help taking his face in my hands, and kissing him there and then in the most un-governess-like fashion in the world.

“ ‘A flower, Freddy!’ said I; ‘where did you get it? Has your mother bought some?’

“ ‘No,’ said Freddy, with no sort of shame on his face.

“ ‘Where did you get it, then?’

“ ‘I picked it as I came along.’

“ ‘So,’ I said, ‘then I’m afraid I can’t take it, my boy.’

“The tears started to Freddy’s eyes at that, and he was going off to his seat. I put my hand upon him, and drew him to me.



“ ‘Don’t you know why I can’t take it, Freddy?’

“ ‘No,’ said he, tremulously.

“ ‘I’ll show you, then. You picked that flower from some one else’s garden, didn’t you?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘Do you think they put it there for us to pick, or that they might have the pleasure of looking at it themselves.’

“ Freddy thought that the latter was their reason, probably.

“ ‘And now they can’t look at it, can they?’

“ ‘No,’ said Freddy.

“ ‘And yet it was theirs, and not ours. Do you think that I can take it now, Freddy?’

“ Freddy saw that I could not take it; and then I told the school what Freddy and I thought, but that I was sure he meant no harm, and only intended to give me pleasure by bringing me a flower. And after school was over, Freddy and I took the flower back to the people from whose garden he

had taken it, and I told them what we had done, and how that none of us meant any harm, and they were very kind about it ; and so Freddy had learned a great lesson without any of the pain or injury of unjust humiliation.

“ You would be tired with the length of my letter if I were to tell you all about Freddy and my other pets, especially as then in justice I should be compelled to tell you of some others who can scarcely be called pets. For, as you will expect, I have my troubles. A poor-children’s school is not an earthly paradise, nor are poor children themselves angels disguised in print frocks. I have had a contest or two with little rebellious sinners, and have not always been victor. Now and then a tempestuous mother has come to the support of her offspring, and then the encounter was more grave ; for, as I find, I am very untrained in the art of self-defence. However, my troubles in this direction get fewer and less serious as the weeks go on ; and so I am hopeful and, in some manner, brave.

“The comfort that Aileen is to me I cannot tell you. All that she ever has been, she remains—my dear Birdie, by night and by day, only a dearer Birdie now than ever. But besides this, she is a real help and comfort in the school-room. She goes about as happy and as busy as a bird at the time of nest-building. Her brightness is contagious—the children catch it, and I catch it. She grows a great favourite with them all. When I give one of my sit-down lessons to two or three classes at once, there is always a little commotion as to where Aileen shall sit. When she is seated, her earnest attention influences the whole class. She answers, like the rest, and is evidently on her dignity to be a school-girl, neither more nor less. The girls call me ‘teacher,’ or ‘Miss Spenser ;’ Aileen strives to shape her mouth to the same respect. But sometimes, when she grows excited, she forgets. Once or twice, when she has not seen a point as I put it, she has said, so that all the class could hear, ‘But, Beata, dear,’ just as she would have done in our old lessons at home. I

think, however, that the universal titter that followed these exclamations has cured her of her absence of mind.

“My little one is ignorant of a good many things that the children of the school know; but her intelligence is greater than that of most of them. These two things make her very energetic. What she does not know she longs to know in proportion to the activity of her intelligence. Her influence in the school exactly corresponds. The elder girls pet her as an infant; yet they look up to her for more than her breeding.

“I leave my little one quite free among her companions. It is to be confessed that had the whole world been open to me, this is not quite the garden in which I would have chosen to plant out my dear little seedling. There are weeds in this garden, and the air is not quite untainted. But I think that not all weeds are poison weeds, and there are seedlings, as they say, that can extract life-supporting food from the most noxious-seeming vapours. The sweet fra-

grance of my dear little seedling's heart, when, in the evening hours, I have her all to myself, makes me not at all anxious about her.

"I promised Aileen from the first that she should teach, and she does. To her infinite delight, I have given her for one hour in the day a class of four small children, of the average and nearly uniform age of four. To these she teaches the mysteries of the alphabet, and the high art of counting up to twenty. But she is a mother as well as a mentor to these small ones. Their pinafores, their hair, and (let it not be named) their noses, are her constant care. They repay her maternal affection with full filial regard, and follow her about like kittens.

"Is this letter long and full enough to please you? If not, ask for more. My correspondents are not so numerous that I need grudge you. Give my best love, and Aileen's, to the dear bully and yourself.

"Ever your affectionate

"BEATA."

## CHAPTER XIII.

IN his now sanctified room, and resting, often, with a new kind of pleasure, in his arm-chair, since his child had sat in it, Geoffrey went on, day after day, with his work, going to Beata most evenings, and spending the Sundays always with her; and the days mounted up once more into weeks, and then there came a change.

On the morning of the day before one of those on which it was his duty and his great pleasure to go to his child, there came a note to him, and the words of the note were the following:—

“Mr. Brownlow presents his compliments to Mr. Leighton, and begs to say that, owing to his being about to enter upon other arrangements for continuing the education of his niece, he will not be able to avail him-

self of Mr. Leighton's services after the lesson of to-morrow."

This note came to Geoffrey, by hand, in the midst of his morning's work. He read it, felt a great weight fall upon his heart, and went on with his work. Presently the words of the note repeated themselves to his mind, and their meaning shaped itself to him with clearer distinctness. Still he went on with his work. Then, with a great shock, his pain woke up. After the lesson of to-morrow, he should never sit by her any more, never hear her sweet voice, never meet the look of her dear face, have no more her to think for, to read for, to quicken his sense of beauty by the anticipation of her meek gladness when he took to her the beauties he had found. The constant sense of her nearness would die out from his heart; the fragrance of sanctity with which her sweet spirit filled his life would be gone from him. A child-Madonna she had been to him, and through her the sunshine of heaven had found its way into a heart too

sad otherwise to admit much brightness. Heaven would not shine into his heart any more, he thought.

This was the pain that gradually revealed itself to Geoffrey ; and after this revelation began he did not go on again with his writing. Through the rest of the morning he struggled with his pain, and had no power over it. His dinner came in, and he ate some of it, and could not have told you, when the remainder was taken away, whether or what he had eaten. The afternoon and the evening were as the morning—he had not even the heart to go and tell Beata of his grief. When the time came, he went to bed, and the bitterness of his pain through the eternal night became tenfold keen, as his child's face, with its manifold meanings, all so well known to his heart, shaped itself before him through the hundred shadowy approaches of futile sleep. In the morning it seemed to him as if limitless time lay between the present and his sacred happiness of yesterday.

When the time came, he went to his les-



son. Mrs. Brownlow was in the room. Mary sat in her old place, and his child in hers at the table ready for her lesson. As he entered, she scarcely looked up at him, and he sat down by her side. Then they began the lesson. Mechanically, as if his lips were moved by a power outside his will, he spoke, and she answered him words that had as little meaning to herself as to him. Mrs. Brownlow remained through the lesson; and Geoffrey was glad from the bottom of his heart when it was over. Then he rose to go. He said nothing about its being their last lesson; spoke no words of his pleasure in his work; expressed no regret that the pleasure was over. He shook hands with Mary first, and her look into his face seemed to speak her his friend for ever, but a friend whom he would never see any more. Then he shook hands with his child, and her face would have been tenfold less sad to him had he seen it dead, he thought. No words were spoken between them at all. He bowed to Mrs. Brownlow, and so he left the room.

At his study door stood Mr. Brownlow.

“Good morning, Mr. Leighton,” he said ; “if you will kindly step in for a minute, and tell me what I am in your debt, I will settle with you at once.”

Geoffrey trembled with the sudden revulsion of this creature’s presence, and the passion of his aversion to the reptile’s every look and tone. But, governing himself, he said only,

“Thank you, I can’t stop. I don’t know what you are in my debt. You can tell, I dare say. You can send it to me, or not, as you please.” And then he made for the street door, and let himself out.

It was one o’clock when he left the house. He did not go home to his dinner, but set off on a long walk, from which he returned and reached Beata’s house just as she had come home from her afternoon school.

“Why, Geoffrey, what’s the matter with you?” she said ; “you look nearly dead.”

“Do I? I’m tired, I suppose. I have been for a long walk, and I daresay I am hungry ; I’ve had no dinner.”

“A long walk and no dinner, Geoffrey! —have you lost your wits?” But then, catching another look in his face, she said, “But there’s something else, dear; tell me what it is.”

“I think, perhaps, I had better have a cup of tea first; then we can talk afterwards.”

So Beata gave him a cup of tea, and made him eat something, and then he showed her the letter, saying, “That came yesterday.”

When she had read it, she said,

“Well?”

“Well, to-day I have given my last lesson.”

“Well, dear?”

“That’s all. I gave the lesson. The aunt was in the room all the time. I shook hands with them, but we did not even say good-bye. The uncle offered to pay me there and then on the study table; those were the most important words that were spoken.”

“And what will you do now?”

“Do!—there is nothing to do, is there? What can I do?”

“You love Elia?”

“Love her! God loves her, and the great dog that she pets loves her. I, who am between, must needs love her. I dare say even her uncle loves her with some reptile sort of love.”

“And she loves you, I am sure.”

“Of course. She would love all things that were not quite loathsome. She must needs love me a little, for the sake of my great love.”

“She loves you very dearly, Geoffrey.”

“So much the worse, then. She will suffer as well as I.”

“Why should you suffer, either of you? Why do you not take her as your wife?”

“Take her as my wife, Beata! I never thought of such a thing. I love her as a sweet child-angel of God. Am I fit to take a wife to my care? And if I were ever so fit, she would not come; she does not love me *so*.”

“She does not love you so, because she is just a sweet child, and knows not how she loves. But she loves you so dearly,

that she will love you any way you bid her. And if you do not bid her to love you as your wife, this parting will bid her, sure enough. She is yours, Geoffrey, whether you take her into your life or not."

"Then I am bitterly sorry, for the thing is hopeless. I dare not tie her to my dark, uncertain life, though to have her near me would be the sweetest heaven that God could give me upon earth. I dare not; but if I dared, I could not have her. She is but a child; her father is far away; her uncle would hold her firmly enough, be sure. She is as much cut off from me as if she were dead. I could not get her if I would; I dare not take her, if I could."

"You are wrong, Geoffrey. It is all new to you at present; but when you have thought of it more, you will know that you are wrong. To whatever sorrow she might come in being your wife—though even you died, and left her before the first year was over—no grief could be like the darkness of being cut off from your life and your love. Such natures as hers do not change;

her life will be a pain and weariness to the end, if she does not come to you."

"You terrify me, Beata. It is a fearful responsibility to me, who am so unworthy of it, and so unfit for it. But even if what you say be true, it is hopeless; they would never let me have her, I am sure."

"I can tell less about that. I see that it is very difficult. I must think about it, and what is much better, *you* must think about it. But do not for a moment think that by your own act you may shut her out from your life. And even of the other do not despair. Such great things from God do not end so, I think."

And even as she spoke, the "I think" died down to a wail in her heart. Had not her love, too, been a great thing from God, and had *it* had any happy ending? To her, life-long pain; to Hartley a confused and embittered life—that had been the fruit of her love. Must she, then, draw back from her comfort of faith for Geoffrey, or must she think that her own love had not been

from God? She could not think this; yet she would not draw back from her faith. God would not mock us, she thought. There must be a happy consummation for all His great things somewhere.

Beata's words had changed the mood of Geoffrey's pain; it is doubtful if they had diminished the pain itself. If that new and closer relation which she proposed for himself and his child was possible to their love, it was impossible to their circumstances, and so the possibility had nothing of comfort in it. The closer they might have been, the greater the separation that was. If the old relation could have continued, he would never have asked for another; that would have satisfied him for ever, he thought. But that was severed. The closer relation he dared not seek, for his child's sake; or if he dared, the daring would be in vain, and would but heap up her pain. A great darkness had fallen upon him; he would lie still in it, lest in his blind gropings he but wounded her for whose wholeness he would



gladly die. This was his resolve, that worked itself out clearly in his mind through a second sleepless night.

But Beata's thinkings inclined not towards inaction. Instinctively she felt that Geoffrey would not act in this matter. She knew his self-distrust, his power of self-abnegation. He will hold it truer love to keep still, she said. But her heart was for action. Geoffrey and his child together might live a life of ideal happiness. In their most perfect contrast, God had made them for each other. It was worth some risk, when the hope of a divine marriage lay ready to be accomplished.

But what to do, for a long time she could not tell. At last, when the night was far spent, she wrote this note to Mary:—

“My brother has told me that he is not to teach his child any more. I think you will understand what his grief is. Unless I altogether misread her, your sister is suffering not less than he. I think that by their natures and their love they are bound to



each other for ever. Is it not so? He will not act, I am sure, for fear of hurting his child. Can nothing be done to save the spoiling of their lives, to win for them such blessed happiness as I think they could give to each other."

Mary's answer to this came in the course of the day. She said :—

"I thought that he would suffer so. It is too true that my darling's grief is no less. I cannot forgive myself, for I ought to have seen it coming upon them both. Yet, indeed, it came, I believe, the first time they met. But it is all quite hopeless. My uncle suspects the truth, and that is why he has stopped the lessons. We are altogether in his hands, placed so by our father, who will not be home for two years. Even if he were returned, I can see no hope. My uncle's influence over him is very great. I must comfort her as I can. You must comfort him, also; he is very dear to us. To pretend a hope would be the worst cruelty of all."

Mary's mention of her uncle was as delicate as it could be ; but Beata understood all that it implied. When she had read the letter, she had not much hope left.

Geoffrey came in, in the evening, and saw at once the change in her manner.

"Well," he said, "you think now that I was right?"

"I am afraid so."

He had had a sort of lingering hope that she might have some brighter putting to set before him.

"How came you to alter your mind?" he said.

Beata hesitated, and he saw that she had some reserve.

"You will not keep anything from me," he said.

"There is nothing worth telling, dear," she answered ; "I know now that you were right."

"Whatever has happened, is worth telling, Beata ; you must keep nothing from me."

At last she was obliged to show him

Mary's letter, and so she added the crown to his pain. His child was as unhappy as he was, and she who should best know said that there was no hope. And then, mingling with his pain for his child was a passionate bitterness against her uncle—a bitterness so passionate that he had to struggle with himself, and to pray to God that he might not become wicked as well as unhappy.

It was about this time that Geoffrey's second book was published. He had been looking forward to the event with considerable eagerness, for the work was the fruit of the first deliberate putting out of all his strength—the first work that he had done since he had fully taken up his vocation of teacher by the pen.

The new book entered upon its career under fair auspices ; but to Geoffrey its advent was as the birth of an infant whose life had been bought at the price of hers for whose sake it was chiefly dear. He sorrowed over the praises of his book as one who should hear the infant praised while his

beloved lay dead in yonder room. For, indeed, his book was full of his sweet child's life and nature, of the better life which she had quickened in his heart. To his lessons with her he could trace the germs of scores of the thoughts he loved best in his book. Now and then the thought itself was hers ; but more often it was that the happy stimulation of her sweet presence, and her reverent and eager response to all that was touched with nobility or beauty, moved his own mind to a richer activity, which surprised even himself by its fruits. And now his book was born, and men praised it, but she through whom the book was what it was, was dead to him. He did not turn away from the praises of his book ; rather they held and fascinated him more by far than they would have done, had he been happy ; but the fascination was all pain. Each sentence that she would have been glad to read brought flooding over his heart the sense of his loss. Each time they praised one of the thoughts born of her influence—and no thoughts were praised so often as these—

her face rose before him and broke his heart with its sweetness, and the pain which now seemed to mingle with the before unmingled sweetness. He did not love his book less ; but the loss of his child struck all his love into pain.

## CHAPTER XIV.

NOT many weeks after Geoffrey was parted from his child, he came across a piece of news that took him, and Beata also, when he carried it to her, very much by surprise. The news was that Hartley was in London. Geoffrey learned the fact quite accidentally, for, while he had never known many of Hartley's London acquaintances, since the leaving of his brother, he had kept up the knowledge of none of them.

Hartley, then, being in London again, it must be told how he came to be there. This history left him on the road to Liverpool, which place he reached in safety, and before many hours he was on board the packet, bound for New York. He had a good many fellow-passengers, and though a voyage across the Atlantic does not take time enough for

the forming of many intimacies, yet he found himself on friendly terms with a good many people of various sexes, and conditions, before the journey was over. For, as always and everywhere, Hartley made the most of his opportunities, or, as it might more truly be said, his opportunities made the most of him. On the packet there was a loving couple who summed their lives in the beauty of a handsome boy of four. Hartley liked children and all animals, and he was a capital-playmate, and so he won those hearts at once. There was an old and rather crotchety lady whose seat he took the second day at dinner. Made aware of his transgression, he resigned the place with cordial apologies, and enlisted himself the old lady's servant for the rest of the dinner-time. To the young ladies he was at the same time so generally and so particularly courteous, that each was quite sure that in his heart of hearts he thought *her* the nicest girl of the set. The men, for the most part, liked him, for he did not dangle after the women, but sat his full time after dinner,

making good jokes of his own, and laughing generously at their bad ones. So on the New York packet, as elsewhere, he earned an easy popularity.

Hartley arrived in New York in good heart and excellent spirits, and at once set about trying to see what could be made of the new world that was before him. It did not take many days to reveal to him that New York, or any other place, without a friend, or an introduction to make one for him, was very different from London, or any other place, with friends or introductions in abundance. For the first time he learned what it is to be a stranger in a strange place, and a stranger, too, with the pretty urgent need of providing himself with food hanging over his head.

He answered a few advertisements, and called on a few of the best firms in the place; and in either case his letters or his personal address secured him a better than average reception. But when, his credentials being inquired for, he had to confess that he had no credentials, but claimed to be taken



wholly on credit, most of the people whom he met seemed to consider the interview practically over.

Our plain-spoken old gentleman put the matter to him clearly, though too tersely for graciousness.

“May I ask how old you are, sir?”

“Twenty-three,” said Hartley.

“You’ve had a good education?”

“I suppose so. I took a fair degree.”

“Do you know anything of business?”

“A little.”

“What house were you with? You could refer us to them?”

“I could, but I would rather not. I parted from them upon a personal matter, and I should desire to start quite *ab initio*.”

“I’m afraid you’ll be a long time starting, then, sir, unless you are willing to begin very low indeed. When a man wishes to ignore his antecedents, it is common to suppose that those antecedents are not altogether to his credit. The assumption may be unjust, but people are apt to make it.

I'm sorry to say I must not spare you any more time this morning."

Hartley's face flushed, and he was about to give a quick answer ; but he was not a dullard, and he could not but see the justice of the old man's putting ; so he held his peace, and departed.

Hartley had governed his tongue, but at the same moment he silently vowed that a second such need of self-command he would not expose himself to. Though he starved, no one should insult him that way again. And as he pondered, starving began to seem to him no impossible contingency. The plain-spoken old gentleman had suggested to him the option of beginning very low indeed. *How* low ? he wondered. He had heard of fortunes built upon a dozen boxes of lucifer matches. But neither were lucifer-matches to his taste, nor any less literal lucifer-matches of a poor drudging clerkship, or some soul-grinding slavery by which life was given for a mess of pottage. Hartley felt himself half beaten, but he was by no means cowed ; starve he might, but there

were several other things that even yet he would not do.

It was in this situation of his affairs that, being one day in an inn to get some food, Hartley heard two men talking of the then recently-discovered Californian gold-diggings, and the great prizes that many of the diggers had already won. The thing was not new to Hartley, but it set him thinking. Suppose he went to the diggings. Other people got food and a fortune there ; he at least could get food, he should think, and so there would be an end to the question of starving. But was *not to starve* the summit of his ambition ? Well, it was not. But not to starve was a *condition* of his ambition, and perhaps the gold-fields might have something more than food for him too. Fortune he would not ask of them ; a gold-digger's fortune had little temptation for him. But enough to build fortune upon, to make him independent of the credentials that bats needed for the enlightenment of their weak eyes, he would be glad of, and that, perhaps, they would yield him.

So, after counting the cost and his money, and finding that he could get there, Hartley resolved to go to California. This resolve he came to with a fling, so to say, for it was one not at all to his heart's taste. To use his body was good fun to him; but to earn bread by his muscles seemed to cast a slight upon all that he had most prided himself upon. Certainly, therefore, the gold-diggings were not at all after his heart. But the gold-diggings might help him to begin the building of his fortune, and so, though with a fling, he resolved to go to them.

In a day or two he set off, and he reached his destination in company with some hundreds of fellow gold-seekers. Even before he reached the place, he had a little warmed to the idea of his work; and once there, he set to with a will. His success from the first was satisfactory. He made no *great* finds, but he had no long run of luck against him, and at the end of the first month he had lived and had saved fifty pounds. During the second month he did better, and during the third better still. The fourth was

a bad month, but the fifth was a better, and so he went on, till, at the end of eighteen months, he had saved fifteen hundred pounds. The money had been by no means easily earned. Long days and aching bones, rough food and sometimes little of it, solitude or coarse companionship, weariness and heart-disgust in abundance—these were the price he had paid for his money. But, anyhow, the price had brought the money, and Hartley did not know any other place in the wide world where, without credentials, it would have done the same.

There is a fascination about gold-getting. Hartley by no means liked his work, yet, as his gold-heap gathered, he began to find that the spell was upon him, and he could not quite resolve to stop his work of gold-gathering. What, however, he could not do was done for him. When he had been about twenty months at his work, he was one day seized with a throbbing, burning headache, which lasted him the day through, and the next day, and the next. He had had a slight

sunstroke, and while its effects lasted he was not above half himself. He had at this time about a hundred pounds' worth of gold in his hut, the rest of his savings having before that found its way to a bank. When, his headache being over, he returned to his work, he found that his hundred pounds had vanished. The loss, as a loss, was annoying; but the theft, and the sunstroke that led to it, put him much more gravely about. These were things which he had not bargained for, and their introduction made the balance in favour of gold-digging considerably less. While he was under the fulness of his irritation, an English newspaper fell into his hands, in which was an article upon mines and mining. In this article it was set forth that a new start had been given to English mining by the numerous discoveries of metallic stores about the world, and by the progress of practical geology.

“One peculiar feature of this revival,” said the writer, “is that many mines which for years had been deserted as used up and

worthless, have, by the application of fresh capital and the sinking of new and deeper shafts, by which more deep-seated veins of the metal have been come upon, been reopened, and are now being vigorously worked, to the joy and profit of their one-time despondent owners. And there can be no doubt that what has already happened in many cases, will, before long, happen in scores of others. We could ourselves name a dozen or two of mines in which no prudent capitalist need fear to risk some portion at least of his wealth, providing always that the new experiment be made with sufficient boldness, and on a scale of cost adequate to the task of really getting at the new metal."

This idea fell like a spark upon the mouldering irritation of Hartley's mind, and made it blaze up into the clear flame of a sudden resolve. He was sick of gold-digging and savage life; he would go back to England with the spoil of nearly two years of exile, and stake all upon a bold venture in the Walcote mine. Why should not it be



one of the old mines which were to rise from the dead. There had always been those in the Walcote neighbourhood who believed that deeper shafts would find fresh metal; but these had been laughed at as dreamers, the mine had been given up as hopeless, and no one had been found willing to throw good money after bad. He would be the one fool, or wise man, he resolved. He had had enough of California, and the fortune that California had brought him was not large enough to be worth storing as fruit. But it might make excellent seed, and as seed he had sought it. To be sure, he might lose all his seed—that, of course. Yet he would sow it; nothing venture nothing have; he would risk all. His one fear was lest, before he reached home, the new idea should have fallen upon some other mind able to translate it into action, and so he should have been forestalled. But Walcote and its belongings slept well, he hoped, and there might be time for him to arrive before they awakened.

Exactly what he would do when he got



back to England, Hartley did not at first see. What he did see, and at once, was that the going back to England again meant the opening of a good many old lines of thought and feeling that he had supposed to be definitely closed. Since his last interview with Geoffrey, he had, as he told himself, given over feeling. That last interview had been the final spasm of a long, hideous nightmare of pain. When that was fairly over, he resolved that he would take care of his digestion, and expose himself no more to such bad dreams. And, partly because his will was strong, partly because his pride was great, partly because his feelings were facile, and any past had small power over him compared with the present, he had managed to keep himself pretty free from any pain that the past might have brought him. If the face of Beata, or Etta, or Geoffrey returned upon him, he threw it impatiently off, and set his heart afresh towards the new purpose of his life. He did not set up as cynic or misanthrope; he neither hated nor shunned his kind. But life had become de-

liberate with him. Always he had lived for himself; but the power he had of, without effort, winning the hearts of other people, and that easy kindliness and surface affectionateness which had come to him with his mother's milk, had made him live for light emotional pleasure rather than for any graver aim. With his new life came a new temper. A life of light emotional pleasure had brought him to bitter humiliation and pain. With emotion, therefore, he would have no more to do. For ambition he would live henceforth. He would make himself a fortune and a name.

But, now, when the resolve to return to England came upon him, with the thoughts that the resolve brought him, it could not but be that feeling should re-awaken also. If he went back to England he would be carried again into the neighbourhood of, and perhaps into contact with, Beata and Etta and Geoffrey, and into the midst of the associations of his humiliation and pain. To this re-contact with the past he was so strongly averse, that, under the influence of

the thought of it, he almost drew back from his newly-formed purpose. But as the day went on his mind wavered. He had plenty of friends in England besides those few—friends from whom, his circumstances being what they were, he was sure of a warm welcome. It would be very pleasant to hear dainty voices chirruping congratulations at his return. The Monctons and Geoffrey and Beata had no doubt thought him ruined when he resigned the secretaryship; it would be worth something to show them into what his ruin had in two years developed. Moreover, though he had prospered already in measure, he meant to prosper much more before long. He would care greatly for this prosperity to shine forth in the faces of those who with friendly or unfriendly eyes had watched him pass away into the shadow of absence.

That Hartley intended to return to England with the air of a prosperous not to say a rich man, may be gathered from his thinkings just set down; that he intended to publish to his friends how he came to be prosperous

or rich must not for a moment be imagined. He had left them with a high head; he would return with the same, and no one would think of asking him the reason of either.

So Hartley returned to England; and he had not been many days back before Geoffrey and Beata learned the fact. It moved them both very much, and Beata it shook to the bottom of her heart. During the two years of his absence she had grown, though not reconciled, yet accustomed to his loss, and she had almost given up the hope of ever seeing him again. His return broke this calm. They were so near that surely they might meet, and for weeks the hope, which was half fear, haunted her, that she should see him. But she did not. No accident brought them together, and he never sought her. So presently she fell back into the old state of unexpectant pain, rendered keener only by the fact that in outer bodily presence he was so near.

## CHAPTER XV.

HARTLEY then being returned to England, he at once set about the work which had brought him there, and the plan of which he had matured upon his homeward voyage. The old Walcote mine was a small one, the property of a few owners who all lived within a dozen miles of its immediate neighbourhood. Its total value had been held at about thirty thousand pounds; and of this total old Mr. Spenser had owned a fourth, and the brothers Geoffrey and Hartley each about a sixth. Mrs. Winthrop held a small share, and the remainder belonged to people who have no place in the present history. Had any one of the owners of the mine been required to make out a full statement of his properties, it is probable that in that statement his pos-

sessions below the surface of the Walcote hill would have found no place.

Hartley's plan was a simple but a bold one. He was in possession of nearly fifteen hundred pounds. With as little of this capital as would accomplish the work, he proposed to buy up the entire property in the mine. That being done, he would set to work to get some geological opinions concerning the existence of deeper deposits of metal in the neighbourhood. These being favourable, he would draw up a statement of the matter, and endeavour to form a company to re-commence working the mine upon the basis of an annual rent charge of percentage of yield to be paid to him; or better still, upon the condition of the company beginning by purchasing the mine outright. If it be suggested that Hartley, in this plan, reversed the proper order of his steps, the answer is that he knew quite well that he staked the whole of the money which he should give to the old proprietors. But, on the other hand, he knew that were he to begin by making investigations, and setting

new hopes a-foot, the possibility of buying up the whole property of the mine would vanish altogether out of his hands.

The first step towards buying up the mine was to find out that the old owners were willing to sell. Of this willingness there was little doubt; but the negotiation involved the opening of communications with several people with whom it had not entered into the mind of Hartley to have anything to do. Beata, as the heiress of Mr. Spenser, Geoffrey and Mrs. Winthrop were among the owners, and though between him and the last of these there was no special cause of quarrel, Hartley very greatly preferred to have no communication at all with any who brought back to him the past that he had once for all put away from him. In this situation of affairs there remained no course but to commit the work to a deputy, and this Hartley resolved to do. He soon found a lawyer who undertook the work for him, and to whom he made it clear that he was not to let it be known for whom he was acting. One journey into the neighbourhood, and a



few days of correspondence, completed the lawyer's task ; and at the end of a month from their first interview, Hartley found himself owner of the whole Walcote mine, at the cost of the sacrifice of about £750 of his capital.

The part which Beata and Geoffrey played in this transference may be shown at a glance. One morning Geoffrey received a letter from Mr. Winthrop, which ran as follows :—

“ MY DEAR GEOFF,

“ An amiable madman has turned up. You may perhaps have forgotten that you are part owner of a famous property known as the Walcote mine. This madman, however, remembers the fact, and covets your fertile vineyard. I have given him some hope that you may be willing to part with it for a consideration. He thinks that he ought to have it cheap, and I think so too. How much shall I say for you? Will half-a-crown do? Let me know whether I may act at my discretion for you and Beata?



I do not mean to negotiate without the other owners.

“Yours affectionately,

“CHARLES WINTHROP.”

“P.S.—The madman seems to have some half-consciousness of his own sad condition, for he has forbidden his lawyer, whom only I have seen, to disclose his name.”

Geoffrey took this letter round to Beata, and got her commission to write back to Mr. Winthrop, and say that he *might* act for them in this important matter, suggesting only that, as Beata's share of the mine was larger than his own, she ought to claim at least three-and-sixpence as the price of the surrender of her rights and expectations for all time to come.

Upon the receipt of this commission, Mr. Winthrop called together the other owners to consider with them what price they should demand for their property. By the most of them the whole thing was looked upon as little more than a joke, and these would have been willing to let the property go for

a merely nominal sum. But among them there were one or two who, being that kind of people who always value their belongings by the scale of other people's estimate, thought that, if somebody else wanted the mine, it must surely be worth having, and were at first half inclined to refuse altogether to sell it, and even at last refused to part with it, except in return for some really appreciable consideration. By the pertinacity of these, chiefly, it was that the price eventually fixed upon was obtained, and Hartley was compelled to pay £750—three per cent, that is, upon the whole estimated value of £30,000, minus his own share of one-sixth of that sum—for a property that a month before would have been declared absolutely worthless.

When, presently, it was announced to Geoffrey that his half-a-crown had mounted up to a hundred and fifty pounds, and to Beata that, instead of three-and-sixpence, two hundred and twenty-five golden sovereigns were to roll into her hands, both of these two sat silent for the full space of

three minutes, and then woke up to declare that they looked upon amiable madness as the finest invention of modern times.

In the course of the negotiations, as a matter of necessity, Hartley's name was mentioned; but as the negotiators, though acting together, acted each for himself, and undertook to transfer but *his* share of the total property, it sufficed when the lawyer replied that he had been in correspondence with Mr. Hartley Leighton, and had already completed with him arrangements concerning his share of the mine.

Hartley was, on the whole, satisfied with his bargain. He had formed no definite idea of how much of his capital he should have to spend, and he was content that nearly half remained to him. While the negotiations were going on, and while he was nursing the hope of making a goodly fortune by this small venture, some compunction crossed his mind. With all his selfishness he was no mere coin-scraper; and with all his anger he had no taste for a money revenge; and it would have pleased

him not at all to build his fortune upon the loss of those who had once been his dearest. Yet, at present, at all events, there was no need for compunction. Thus far they were the gainers by him; and if he had asked them to share his venture they would not have done so. There was no need, therefore, to trouble at present; and if, by-and-by, he should find himself a rich man through the mine, it would be time enough then to think what to do. Only, then, as now, and rich or poor, for all personal affection, he had done with them for ever; and as he would never again receive from them anything for which thanks could be due, so they should never thank him, or know that they had cause to do so, whatever his own pride might prompt him to do.

Hartley, then, was master of the Walcote mine. The next thing was to utilize his new property, and to this end the whole machinery of geologic exploration and company forming had to be set on foot. In such work he was a novice, and had much to learn; but in such work he was happy, and

his brains were fitted for it. So the work progressed, and Hartley was altogether himself, and once more a past was to him almost as if it had not been.

## CHAPTER XVI.

HARTLEY was good at business, and did not suffer pleasure to stand in its way. Yet, on the other hand, he had no notion of permitting business to shoulder pleasure out of its place. Hard-working and ambitious he was ; for the life of a mill-horse he had no taste. Moreover, no mere mill-horse motive had brought him back to England. In California he might have gathered enough of such profit as mill-work could bring. But he came back to England that he might *live* once more, and so he had not been many days returned before he commenced to call upon his friends of the old time. The welcomes that he received did not in the main disappoint him. Everybody, on the first day, at all events, was very much surprised to see him ; but nearly everybody seemed to be as much pleased as sur-

prised. He looked as well as ever, people said, which Hartley understood rightly to mean as handsome as ever. He looked older, people said; but they said it in such a way as to make it clear that they did not think the additional years a drawback. When, inquiringly, the occasion of his return was glanced at, he said that he was tired of travel and foreign parts, and wanted to be amongst his friends once more. When he was asked something of all that, during this long time, he had seen, he had an excellent store of travellers' stories on hand, at least as true as travellers' stories usually are. Altogether, his tone was as royal as it had been when he was master of thirty pounds and no prospects, and more royal it could not well have been; and his acquaintance in general seemed prepared to restore him without demur to his lionship of former days.

Hartley's calls took him some time to make; yet, long as they took him, they were but the prelude to more elaborate visitations. On most days he carried home with him an

invitation or two to some evening gathering—for dinner, for dancing, or for some other of the great purposes that fill up the lives of well-to-do people of leisure. As a consequence, Hartley spent very little time in his rooms. With business and pleasure-taking his hours were filled, and it was not long before, at one house or another, he had met pretty well all his acquaintances of the old time.

Among the parties at which, during the first three or four weeks, Hartley was present, was one given by a Mr. Rowsley, an old entertainer of his, and a lady who rejoiced in three bright-tempered, lively daughters. In the course of the evening, and, indeed, soon after he arrived, Hartley was standing chatting with Constance, the eldest of the daughters.

“There is an old friend of yours, close by,” said she.

“Which one? I had many, I am thankful to say.”

“Mrs. Monsell, I mean.”

“My memory fails me.”



"Indeed? But perhaps you did not hear of the marriage. Etta Moncton, she was."

"Etta? Is Etta here?" Hartley said, looking quickly round, which Constance also did. Etta saw then, and to Hartley's great surprise, she bowed.

He and Constance moved towards her, and she made room for him by her side, while Constance went on to some one else. He sat down, wondering greatly.

"Nobody outside my own family knew of what passed between us," Etta said; "I think it will be as well for their ignorance to continue, if you think so too."

Hartley looked at her, just bending his head in assent, and waited.

"That is all I had to say," Etta said.

"I am grateful to you for speaking to me," Hartley said.

"You need not be. It was for my own sake, not yours, though I think it will be less disagreeable for you too."

"I have often been bitterly sorry—" Hartley said, and paused.

"What?" said Etta, with a manner as if

he had spoken Hebrew to her. Then she turned and made some passing remark to a lady who was sitting not far from her on the other side, and Hartley was left to finish his sentence to himself, if he pleased.

He sat for a minute or two, and then rose from his seat and passed on to some one else. He talked, for he would have talked if his head had been off, almost, but that evening his conversation neither shone nor sparkled. One or two young ladies all but found him heavy in hand, and he went home the very earliest of the company.

Hartley went home so early because his best efforts did not suffice to enable him to recover his equilibrium after his short conversation with Etta. That conversation had excited him and annoyed him, and, most of all, puzzled him. The fact of talking with Etta, after all that had happened, could not but excite him somewhat, however stoical he might be ; and when he began that sentence which he never finished, there was, for the moment, some amount of real feeling in his mind. To be cut short and dismissed by

Etta in that imperial fashion was annoying ; but most of all it was puzzling. Such a relation between them, and such a manner in her, contradicted all the notions of the “ dear little thing ” of former days. The Etta of to-night was another being from the Etta he had known, and so much another as to be almost a diametrical opposite of the first. This it was that puzzled Hartley so greatly as to make him almost forget his annoyance in his bewilderment. For Hartley knew so little the weight of strong, deep feeling, that he could not understand how in a nature not of the highest and most God-rooted type, one great profanation committed upon its sacredness could reverse the whole character, and dry up the sources of those graces which in their full flow make the beauty and the tenderness of womanhood.

## CHAPTER XVII.

AMONG Mr. Rowsley's guests, besides Etta, was Etta's husband. This gentleman had held his honourable position for now about eighteen months. He had become a suitor for it shortly after Hartley's departure, having then come fresh into the circle of the Monctons. As soon as he saw Etta, he was struck by her, and the almost contemptuous indifference with which she treated him and all other men fanned his feelings, he being what he was, and soon he became desperately in love. So, within two months of his first seeing her, he proposed to Etta, and she, with her contemptuous indifference unabated, and pending the consent of her father, accepted him. In gaining Mr. Moncton's consent, there was small difficulty. Mr. Monsell was well to do, not to say wealthy, thoroughly respectable,

and evidently very much in love. If Etta chose to accept him, that ended the matter ; he, Mr. Moncton, *could* have no objection, though in his heart of hearts, notwithstanding that no great admixture of romance coloured his nature, he deeply wondered that his soft-hearted child had so quickly forgotten her old, false love.

So Etta was engaged to Mr. Monsell, though certainly, except Mr. Monsell himself, no one exhibited any particular delight at the fact. There were moments, even, when Mr. Monsell's delight paled a little. Though the most devoted of lovers and love-makers, the return he received for his affection was the smallest, or was *nil*. If he made Etta a present, she thanked him, but said that such things were quite unnecessary. She almost studiously avoided being alone with him. She laughed at his ardours, and when, upon one or two supreme occasions, he insisted upon kissing her, she gave him her cheek. If he reproached her a little, she bore it quiescently ; if he reproached her more strongly, she

grew angry ; and once or twice, when his reproaches grew hotter than usual, she told him sharply that his fate was in his own hands, and left the room. So Mr. Monsell was by no means a privileged or happy lover, and could but console himself with the hope that his mistress would melt towards him when she became his wife.

Mrs. Moncton was at this time very unhappy about her child. When first Mr. Monsell had made his appearance, she was glad ; a true love would be the best cure for a false, she hoped. She was not much surprised or distressed at first that Etta was not very responsive to her new lover. Such wounds take time to heal, she said. But when, as the weeks went on, Etta's manner hardened rather than softened to him who was so soon to be her husband, Mrs. Moncton grew unhappy and alarmed, and determined to speak to her child upon the matter. So one day she said,

“ You will soon be married now, Etta.”

“ Yes, mamma.”

“ Mr. Monsell is a good man, I think.”

"Yes, mamma, I dare say."

"And he loves you very much, my child."

"Does he, mamma?"

"Yes, Etta; don't you know that he does?"

"I dare say; I didn't mean that he doesn't."

"And you, Etta—do you love him as much, do you think?"

"I, mamma?"

"Yes, you, Etta; you are going to be his wife, you know."

"Yes, I know; don't let us talk about it, mamma."

"I almost wish you were not going to be married, Etta."

"Do you, mamma? Everybody says what a good match it is. Do you want me to be in love? I was in love once, and see what came of it. It is best as it is; I am safe from suffering so much, at least."

"It is neither best nor right, Etta. Because you gave your love to a false man and suffered for it, it is not better, therefore, not to love a true one. If you cannot love your

husband, Etta, I had much rather the match were broken off."

"And what should I do with myself then, mamma?" And so the conversation stopped, leaving Mrs. Moncton no more comforted than when it began.

However, soon after, she was very near to having her wish. On one of those rare occasions when they were alone, Mr. Monsell said to Etta,

"Etta, I heard your name linked with that of a Mr. Hartley Leighton the other day, in a way I did not at all like. Will you tell me about it?"

"Yes, if you please. Mr. Hartley Leighton proposed to me, and I refused him, that's all."

"Well, but did nothing go before? Did he just propose to you off-hand, with nothing to lead to it or to justify it?"

"The subject is unpleasant to me. I had rather not talk about it."

"But, Etta, you must consider that the subject is one that very closely concerns me."



"I had rather not talk about it, I say," said Etta, with a flash in her manner.

"But I had much rather, and I must insist," said Mr. Monsell, roused for once.

"*Insist?*" Etta said, and left the room, while Mr. Monsell left both the room and the house.

"You have your wish, mamma," Etta said, going to her mother, and telling her what had passed.

However, after two days, Mr. Monsell's love was too much for him, and he wrote to Etta, begging to be allowed to come back, and surrendering the point on which they had parted. Etta let him come, and, half respecting him that he had had the courage to insist, and half despising him that he had had the weakness to yield, she told a little of what had passed between her and Hartley. Henceforth Mr. Monsell was more in love than ever, and Etta was, for a time, a little less aggressive in her hardness and indifference to him; but Hartley remained rather a sore subject between them.

And now, on this night of Mrs. Rowsley's

party, when they reached their home, Mr. Monsell said to Etta,

“How came that fellow to have the impertinence to sit down by you and talk to you?”

“Because I called him.”

“You called him? What could you want to call him for?”

“I wished to speak to him.”

“What could you have to say to him?”

“Something worth saying, yet nothing important to you.”

“But I want to know what it was, Etta.”

“Bless the man! Do you think I’m a baby? For two pins I wouldn’t tell you, just because you are so silly. I told him that no one but my own family knew that he and I had once been fools or worse, and that the ignorance of the rest of the world might as well continue.”

“I wish you hadn’t said that or anything else to him. I want you to abstain from speaking to him under any circumstances in future.”

“What, and make myself the gossip of

all our set! I am sorry I cannot obey you so far. You may be sure that I have as little desire to speak to him as you could wish me to have, but I have still less desire to be pointed at by the whole town. A few weeks of empty civility will stop all gossip; after that you may quarrel with him, or shoot him, for aught that I care."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN Robert left Walcote, before setting out with the expedition, he felt little doubt that he had seen the place for the last time. The reason of this thought, or, more strictly, of this resolve, is very well known to the reader. He would not be so foolish as to *cultivate* pain, and to spoil his life by heaping up a want that could never be satisfied. Beata would presently become a sweet and reverent memory in his heart, he trusted, and then the pain would have ceased, and he would be very grateful to have her there. It was to give all aid to this happy consummation that he at once accepted the post in the expedition when it was offered him.

But his two years' wanderings did not fulfil for him the service he had hoped of them. As the months went on, Beata's face

disturbed him more and more, and the pain of separation from her would by no means soften. In the still nights and the eventless days of their long voyages, in dim, holy forest paths, and on lonely mountain tops, her memory had power over him, the more, almost, that she had always so held him off and kept him solitary even in her presence. When most he was lonely, then he most longed for her; and the yearning to see her, if but to see her, grew so strong upon him, that his resolve to go no more to Walcote gave way, and he determined that once more, as soon as ever he had landed, he would risk all pain, and see the old place and her again, at any cost.

And this resolve he carried out. Within two days of his landing, he was on the road to Walcote; and, reaching there, he made his way at once to the house of the Winthrops.

“What, Robert!” said Mr. Winthrop, in unfeigned amazement. “I did not know that you were in England.”

“How long does the *Times* take reaching

here, then?" said Robert. "I was announced two days ago."

Mr. Winthrop pleaded guilty to not reading the *whole* of the *Times*, and supposed that he must have missed the particular paragraph.

"And what have you come for?" said Mrs. Winthrop, though that was not her first utterance.

"To see you, of course," Robert answered, colouring a little.

"Have you heard any news about the Rectory?"

"No; what news is there?"

"The old man is dead."

"Dead, is he? And where is Miss Spenser, and Aileen?" he added, sacrificing grammar to shyness.

"They are in London."

"In London! I've just come from there." (Mrs. Winthrop thought that the knowledge earlier would have saved Robert a journey.)

"Whom are they with, or what are they doing there, I wonder?"

"You may well ask that," broke in Mr.

Winthrop ; " they are with nobody at all, and what they are doing is just taking charge of a charity-school."

" Taking charge of a charity-school !" said Robert, whose surprise was rising rapidly to bewilderment. " What are they doing that for ?"

" To earn their living, Beata says."

" But who let them do that ? Had they no friends ? Why did not they stop with you ? I don't mean to be impertinent ; but I think that you would have taken care of them."

" No fear of your being impertinent upon that point, my boy. Of course we would have taken care of them, and gladly, only too gladly. But Beata stood out that she would earn her own living, and Geoffrey backed her in it ; so she has gone to keep the charity-school that he found for her. I said I'd never forgive him, and I haven't."

" It is not exactly what is called a charity school," said Mrs. Winthrop, quietly ; " and I don't think that Geoffrey is to blame in the matter. Beata was determined to earn

her living, and he thought that this would be the least painful and the most satisfying way for her to do it in. It is but just to say that Beata feels more and more convinced that Geoffrey was right, as from the first she thought he was."

Mr. Winthrop chafed and snorted at that, and Robert fell into deep thought. Beata, who seemed royal enough for a queen, earning her bread as a charity school-mistress was a picture that it took some time to grasp. For a moment, so hard was the re-adjustment of his conceptions, the old Beata seemed gone out of being, and he groped for her in vain. But soon he found her, and could picture her completely in the new surroundings; and then the love which had been so gently born more than two years ago, and which had quietly grown up into maturity in the twilight of absence, and the stillness of nature's solitudes, broke forth in the fulness of its might, and Robert lifted his face to those of his friends, and out of it there quivered the resolve so plainly writ that both could read it, that he would con-



secrete himself her servant and knight, if so she would suffer him, or, indeed, whether she would suffer him or not, only her joyful servant or her sad one, according as she permitted or disallowed his service.

"Well, Robert?" said Mrs. Winthrop.

"I am going back to London, if you will give me Miss Spenser's address."

"And if I give it you?"

"Then I will use it."

"You scarcely can. She is alone in London, and in lodgings."

Robert was puzzled. He did not think that that should hinder him, but it was a difficulty that had to be met.

"You might call on Geoffrey first," Mrs. Winthrop said.

"I'd rather not."

"Why, I wonder?"

Robert did not answer, yet there is no doubt that he felt he would very much rather not call on Geoffrey first. From the beginning of their acquaintance, it had been Geoffrey's perverse doom to irritate and repel Robert by the exhibition of traits of

character that as little really belonged to him as they did to the man in the moon. The conversation of the last few minutes had capped all Robert's previous dislike. Beata was a charity school-mistress, and Geoffrey had had a large hand in making her so.

"What am I to do?" said Robert. "I mean to go, of course."

"I'll go with you," Mr. Winthrop said; "I'm old enough to make it all proper, I should think."

Both Robert and Mrs. Winthrop smiled at this, but after a little they came to think that it was not at all a bad idea, and after a little longer they thought it a very excellent one indeed.

"When is the best time to see her?" Robert said.

"On Saturday, I should think; that is her leisure day. In the evenings, Geoffrey is often there."

"This is Wednesday. Will you go up with me to-morrow, and stay over Sunday?" Robert asked of Mr. Winthrop.

Mr. Winthrop would do that or anything

else that would further Robert's new hope, and so that matter was settled.

Then Robert went out for a stroll by himself; he wanted to think, he said. It was this time two years that he had said a final good-bye, as he thought, to Walcote and to Beata. Well, that was a sad time, following some of the pleasantest times of his life. How sad and how pleasant they had been, he remembered with new freshness as he came on one after another of the old spots. His knowledge of Beata had begun a new life for him, and the new life had had pleasures and pains entirely its own. And now he was beginning another new life, which yet would be, for happiness or for pain, the fruition of the first. There would scarcely be room for admixture now—his happiness or his pain would be complete. And which would it be? He was by no means confident; he was indeed altogether diffident and doubtful. Beata's past behaviour to him had been such as to give small warrant for the step he was about to take. All her manner had said, "Friend you may be, if

you will, but no lover." Towards the end of the time, her manner had granted him even less than this, and had put him even further than ever away from her. And now he was going to ask her to take him into the nearest place of all. Clearly there was small room for confidence here—rather space for the most abounding mistrust. Judged by all ordinary standards, he was about to commit an act of egregious folly, and might look for such rewards as such folly brings. Well, be that as it would; he loved Beata with all his heart, and would tell her so. She now needed some one to love her with all his heart. If she would let *him* be that some one, it would be most well for him, and for her not ill, he trusted. If she would not let him be that some one, little harm would have been done by the asking. He would be no poorer, but only assured of his poverty; while she would at least forgive him for his boldness, and he would be her servant and knight, whatever happened.

So Robert put his case to himself, and

when he had put it quite clearly, he went home, and spent a cheery evening with the Winthrops. Mr. Winthrop was in the highest spirits, and though he governed his tongue in a, for him, remarkable manner, it was easy to see how jubilant he was at the anticipation of an event whose issue he had already forecast. In the course of the evening one or two young ladies dropped in, with a brother, and Mrs. Winthrop was both amused and interested in observing Robert's manner to them. The old general kindly manner to young ladies, as one variety of living creatures, had given way to a special interest in them as young ladies. His strong love for one woman made all women interesting to him, and removed him as far from his old naturalist state of mind, on the one hand, as, on the other hand, he was distant from that so-called lover condition in which all other women are held as nought because one woman is something more than nought.

When, the next day, they set off, Mrs. Winthrop said to Robert, "God speed you,

dear! I love you both so well, and yet I could wish nothing happier for either of you than that you should succeed in your errand. Give Beata my dearest love, if you get as far as that, and tell her how glad and thankful I am. Perhaps the old place will look bright again soon."

Mr. Winthrop and Robert reached London by the Friday evening, and on Saturday, between eleven and twelve o'clock, they went together to Beata's home.

## CHAPTER XIX.

UNTIL they crossed Beata's threshold, Mr. Winthrop's and Robert's course, whatever might come of it, seemed to them pretty plain sailing ; but *as* they crossed her threshold, their courage began to fail, and they suddenly recognised the delicacy of their situation. However, no time was given them for reflection, for Aileen, hearing Mr. Winthrop's voice at the door, was upon them in a moment.

"So you have come at last ! I thought you would *never* come. I sang the linnet-song every day, and *yet* you didn't," said the child, half laughing and half sobbing, as the warm-hearted old man took her up in his arms.

"Here's somebody else you know," said he.

Aileen looked at the somebody else, and, through the disguise which two years of travel

had put upon him, it took her a moment to recognise him.

“Why, it’s Robert,” she said, half shyly.

“You’ve not forgotten me, Eily, have you?” said Robert, pained as by a bad portent; “I’ve thought of you hundreds of times. Don’t you remember all our grand times?”

“Yes, Robert; I only forgot for a moment. I’m so sorry,” said the child, who had all the heart-discernment of a woman.

They were moving into Beata’s room, where Beata herself awaited them.

“Well, my girl,” said Mr. Winthrop, taking both Beata’s hands, “I’ve brought an old friend to see you; I’ve been waiting for some excuse to run up, and now here’s a good one.”

Beata shook hands gravely with Robert. It was not a light thing in any case to meet him thus; and Mr. Winthrop’s words had half told the purpose of their visit.

“Well, how goes on the school? Are you nearly tired of it? It, or London, or something, is killing you fast. How’s Geof-



frey? Not that I want to know. I never mean to forgive him till we get you out of this."

So Mr. Winthrop went on, getting deeper and deeper into the mire at every sentence he uttered, while Beata sat, pale and grave, and Robert felt that a few minutes more of this would make him too big a fool to say a word worth saying when his chance came.

Even Mr. Winthrop was dimly conscious that he was making a muddle of his mission, so, pulling up sharply, he said,

"I've a call to make; I'll be back soon; you come with me, Eily, to see that nobody ill-uses me. I'm always dreadfully timid in this wicked London."

Beata made some faint effort to detain them both, or Eily, at least; but she was as much thrown off her feet by the discomfort of the situation as the rest of them, and so Mr. Winthrop had his way, and left with Eily.

Robert saw that, after this opening, nothing remained for him but to go straight to his point, so he said,

“I am afraid that I have no right to force myself upon you in this way ; but I could not help coming, and I knew no other way of seeing you. I trust that you will forgive me, at all events.”

Beata could not but sign to him her forgiveness, if that were needed ; the simple humility of his manner left no room for anger or annoyance.

“I would not have ventured to come,” he said, “if things had been with you as they once were. I should have longed to come then just as much, but I should not have dared to do so. But when I found that you were out in this hard world alone, I could not help coming to tell you how deeply thankful I should be if you would let me be your faithful servant through life.”

Beata did not answer, but sat with a face as full of pain as if he were pronouncing some sentence of sorrow upon her head.

“I know that you have given me no right to hope. From almost the very first, when I but admired and revered your sweet womanhood, you put me, though never so

kindly, far away from you. But this could not prevent my admiring and reverencing you still, nor could it prevent my growing at last to love you, as I never thought I could love a woman. When I left you two years ago, I knew that I loved you, but I did not know how deeply I loved you. Through the two years of my absence this knowledge has come to me, and I know now that I love you and revere you with all the power of my nature. Through the two years you have been constantly with me, growing dearer and dearer every day, and though I should never see you any more, you will be with me, and altogether dear to me, to the end of my life. Of this I am sure, yet I would not have told you, for you never gave me the right to do so. But when I thought of you, out in the hard world, toiling for your bread, and wearing out your sweet and queenly grace, I felt that I must tell you, and pray you, if you could, to let me have the blessedness of taking you into my care, and paying myself a hundredfold for my love, by living on your sweet pre-

sence about me. Please let me, if you can. I will be very tender to you."

So Robert told his love, and pleaded with the woman who had never given him any right to plead. She, meantime, grew more and more full of pain as his words went on; and when he had finished, with tears in her eyes, she said, "I am so very sorry. I thought you understood that this must never be."

"I did, almost," he said; "but I was not quite sure."

"Be quite sure now, and for ever," she said, "for it is very true. I don't think it was my fault. Please forget me as soon as you can."

"It was not your fault in the least, but I shall never forget you. And you, are you to go on like this all your life? I cannot bear that. Do let me serve you in some way, so far."

"You cannot serve me, and it is best as it is. Other burdens are more easily borne thus. I am very grateful to you. I will bless you always, for your goodness. Do not let us say any more."

So he held his peace, and pondered what the other burdens might be. She had used those words to honour him, and so to comfort him, he was sure. She had given him, through the faint suggestion, her most sacred confidence, that so he might be honoured and comforted, and perhaps, too, that so he might know that his hopes were dead. And as he pondered this, and wondered, too, how the time would pass until Mr. Winthrop and Aileen returned, Geoffrey came in and solved that difficulty. And then it flashed across Robert's mind to connect him with those other burdens, and he grew angry with him, as a blind fool who understood not the riches that God offered to him, but hurled them back on to the heart of God's sweet wealth-bearer, filling her with pain in the act, and beggaring those, wiser, in this, than he, who would have felt themselves rich past boasting with one coin of the many that he so blindly or so scornfully rejected.

And soon Mr. Winthrop and Aileen returned; and then there was vague general talk, in which most of the speakers were ill

at ease; and then, after a while, Mr. Winthrop and Robert left together.

“Well, my boy,” said the former, “how have you got on?”

“I have not got on at all?”

“She won’t have you?”

“No.”

“Not at present. Faint heart never won fair lady.”

“My heart is not faint, but I shall never win that lady, nor ever try again.”

“I believe the girl’s demented. I can’t make her out a bit.”

“She is not demented, but even sweeter and truer than I knew. It is worth while to have known her, even at the price I pay.”

“Well, you take it bravely, my boy; I’m glad of that. I was afraid you would be more cut up.”

But if Robert’s mother could have seen him, and looked into his eyes, she would have known that he, too, had a burden which would last him his lifetime.

## CHAPTER XX.

“AN unexpected visit,” said Geoffrey to Beata, when Mr. Winthrop and Robert were gone.

“Yes, indeed.”

“What is Mr. Winthrop in town for? I never thought to ask him.”

“I would rather not talk about it, dear,” Beata said.

But Mr. Winthrop, when, the next day, Geoffrey called upon him at his hotel, had no such reticence.

“I believe you’ve turned the girl’s head,” he said, with a manner as nearly savage as was possible to him.

“I don’t think her head is turned,” said Geoffrey; “and certainly I have not turned it.”

“What but madness could have led her to take that place at the charity school, and

who put the idea into her head, I should like to know. And now when as fine a fellow as walks the earth comes and wants to take her out of all this, and put her into her right place again, she will have nothing to say to him. I call it right down madness, and I believe that you are at the bottom of it, Geoff."

"Indeed," said Geoffrey, who saw that his old friend was really pained at the state in which things were, and vexed with him for his supposed part in the matter—"indeed you are quite wrong. I never suggested to Beata to think of earning her living, and should have been but too proud and thankful to take care of her myself, though I am not good for much in such ways. But she would not hear of it. I *did* suggest to her the school; that is true. But if you could know all that I know, you would see that I was right in that; there is no way in which she could so little painfully earn her living. Of the last matter of which you speak, I know nothing, and your words surprise me very much indeed."



“Do they? Well, I’m glad to hear that, my boy; for, to tell you the truth, I was feeling very angry with you. But then what *can* make the girl so perverse? Can nothing be done to bring her to reason, do you think?”

Geoffrey feared that nothing could be done in the case; and he left Mr. Winthrop better in temper, to be sure, but very much put out, nevertheless, at the general perversity of human affairs.

“I have learned the reason of the old man’s visit to town,” Geoffrey said to Beata, when next he saw her.

“Have you?” she said, colouring a little. She was glad that he knew, though it was not in her to tell him.

“Yes; the old man himself told me. It is a great pity, and I am very sorry. But you will not manufacture new pain for yourself out of self-reproach, I hope.”

“No; I hope not; I hope I need not,” she said; and so the matter dropped.

But though she hoped not, and hoped she need not, yet of course she did. The one

thing which it seemed that Beata was not to have, was calm. In leaving her old home to enter upon her new life with the children, her great longing and hope had been for peace, and the limitation of her cares and pains within the circle of her present work and duties. For Beata was still young, and did not know that this is the last blessing or curse (whatever curse may mean) to fall upon natures such as hers. But experience soon taught her the vanity of her hopes. No school-room walls could shut out the memory or the power of the past. Time after time her old sorrow about Hartley had re-awakened to its full life in her heart; and now upon the old sorrow came the new one, and for weeks Robert's face haunted her, and broke her peace a thousand times by its unrepublishing sadness.

It is an old story to say that in this, as in all things, the loving sympathy of Geoffrey was Beata's constant strength and comfort. But it is a somewhat new story that at this time Geoffrey asked of her almost as much support as he gave to her. It is a true

story, however; for since the loss of his child, he was very sad and heart-stricken indeed. The pain of that loss did not abate. A day or two after he last saw her, a few books of his that she had had came back, with his name and Mr. Brownlow's thanks written upon the wrapper. He opened the parcel with a vague eagerness that he knew to be absurd, and found nothing for his pains. He looked carefully through the books, in the hope that some rough notes of her work, or some pencil-marks, or some blots, even, from her hand, might remain; but there was none. She had touched the books, and read them—that he knew—and this comfort alone they brought him.

Then, after that, the darkness was utter. Week after week passed away, and no sign from her or hers came near him. The sisters came no more to Beata's school; Miss Cleveland was abroad; he knew no one else who knew them. He often passed the end of their street; once he had tried to pass down it, and had failed. He supposed that

he should never see them again ; yet week by week, as the time went on, his heart more and more hungered for a sight of his darling's face. A sight, though in truth it was ever before him. Any moment he could shut his eyes and see it, as he had seen it a hundred times, yet changing visibly day by day. The old sweetness in it was the same ; but the sadness grew unceasingly. So for all purposes of sorrow she was present with him every hour, while for comfort and gladness she was absent, and absent for ever, he thought.

## CHAPTER XXI.

HARTLEY had chosen to keep to himself his part in the purchase of the Walcote mine, but he by no means desired the fact of the purchase to remain a secret, but rather, and for obvious reasons, wished it to be as widely known as possible. Accordingly, there soon began to appear in the local papers paragraphs concerning the mine—its sale, and the probability of its working being recommenced. At first everyone, except the few who knew, was incredulous upon both these points ; but the many signs of activity about the place soon backed the reports, and changed the general feeling from incredulity to wonder.

The geologic examinations and testings which Hartley caused to be made as soon as the purchase was completed, did not seem likely to disappoint his hopes, or to contra-

dict the prognostic of the article that had set his scheme on foot. By deeper borings new metal was reached, and the geologic conformation of the spot made it likely that such findings were more than accidental. Hartley was not content with one opinion upon the matter, and called in a second and more eminent authority to cheque the opinion of the first. The second authority, on the whole, confirmed and strengthened the judgment of the first, naming only one danger—the occurrence of a fault in the strata—upon the likelihood of which no definite opinion could in the present case, he said, be given. This danger notwithstanding, however, he gave it as his judgment that the re-opening of the mine was a promising undertaking, possible only with a considerable capital, but likely to yield to that capital an excellent return within no long space of time.

Armed with these opinions, Hartley set to work to form his company, though he himself still, for the most part, kept in the background, and left to his lawyer the duty of representing him. In the first place, the

former proprietors of the mine were applied to, and invited to join in a new venture with their old and faithless friend. These were very shy—sure at first that they would have nothing to do with it, and doubtful, later, whether they were not very foolish if they did, yet hankering all the time for a sip of the old cup; and in several cases overcome at last by their longings, they did actually commit themselves to the new experiment, and suffer their names to appear on the list of directors, which presently, the prospectus being prepared, went forth to the public at large.

These names were a great acquisition; they gave courage to the local papers to support the scheme, and to people living in the neighbourhood to take up the shares. The capital asked for was £250,000, to be subscribed in ten thousand shares of £25 each. It was to be left to the board, at the end of a definite period, to decide whether the mine should be bought or rented of the owner, the precise conditions of the agreement in either case, as proposed by him,

being set down in the prospectus. Partly by happy fortune, and partly by the influence of some of the first supporters of the scheme, one or two of the London papers gave notoriety and encouragement to the undertaking ; and so, daily, new applications for shares came in, and the venture prospered visibly.

Hartley was very elated, and his exultation showed through his face and manner, though no one of all his acquaintance as yet knew what it was that made him so gay and buoyant. At evening gatherings he went about from one to another, like some affable prince among his too much honoured courtiers, beginning a talk and ending it according to his own most royal impulse, and only not set down as insolent because the exuberance of his spirits, and the brimful enjoyment which he seemed to have in life and motion, suffered none but the sulkiest natures to go lower than a half-envying admiration of his vitality and unqualified zest in being.

There were, of course, some new-comers into Hartley's circle, and among these was



one, a lady, whom he saw more than once before he was introduced to her or spoke to her. This lady's name was Miss Hazlitt. She had known most of Hartley's acquaintances longer than he had done ; but Hartley had not known her in the old time, for the reason that she had been away from England for a year or two, travelling with her parents. Soon after Hartley's departure she had returned, through the death of her father ; and her mother being now an invalid, she came out a good deal alone, or under the wing of some friend who gave her a nominal protection. As has been said, Hartley had noticed this lady more than once before he spoke to her, and he thought that she observed him somewhat. She sat a good deal alone, in company ; neither women nor men seemed particularly eager to talk with her. Yet she looked neither lonely nor bored ; not many things seemed to escape her observation, and not many things that she observed seemed to be without interest or amusement for her. The second evening that Hartley saw her there

were two children among the company. Hartley noticed that she took to them, and that *they* did not seem afraid of her. Once, in a momentary lull in the buzz of the talkers, a shout of laughter from the two children was heard all over the room. The little ones were disconcerted; but Miss Hazlitt was by no means so, but went on with what she was telling them as though no one had been in the room but they and she. It was later in the same evening that a mild-looking gentleman was standing trying to talk with her. Hartley was near, but he did not hear the mild gentleman's remark. He heard Miss Hazlitt's, however, and it was, "Oh, most men are such fools;" and there being in her manner no tone of "present company excepted," the mild gentleman quickly subsided, and went away to find another companion.

Hartley made Miss Hazlitt's acquaintance in the following fashion:—

He was at an evening party, when his hostess said to him,

"There is a lady here who, I think, would

suit you. Shall I introduce you to her?"

"I am in your hands," Hartley said, and forthwith was conducted to his new acquaintance.

"I have heard a good deal about you," said the lady. "I thought I should like to talk to you."

Hartley looked at his new friend, expecting to find her a hundred, or gauntly ugly. She was neither. He bowed.

"You have travelled a good deal, I hear," she said; "so have I. Where have you been to?"

"To America."

The lady laughed.

"That's a large place," she said.

"So it is; but I am going to publish a chart of my wanderings in detail, and I will send you a copy, if I may."

Miss Hazlitt looked at Hartley. She had no objection to a man who could box her ears when she was rude. Most people were rather too polite to her, for she had a fortune. She smiled to herself, and sat playing

with her fan, leaving Hartley to make the next approach.

He was in no hurry to begin, but sat looking at his companion. She was tall and finely-made; dark, rather than fair; had a well and rather haughtily poised head, with strongly marked features to her face; beautiful, almost, but by no means soft. Her smile was a quiet one, with more satire than mirth in it, and her age was about twenty-five, Hartley thought.

"Do you like travelling?" he said.

"I like most things in a quiet way."

"So do I," said Hartley.

"Only not in a quiet way, I should fancy."

"Not? I don't know. I think I take things quietly enough."

"Within, you mean, I suppose? Most people would fancy from your outside that you took things very warmly indeed."

"I don't understand."

"Are you *very* happy this evening?"

"At this moment, very," Hartley said, and in saying it managed somehow to escape being either satirical or impertinent.

"Of course ! but except at this moment?" said Miss Hazlitt.

"I am calm."

"Just so. Most people would imagine that you were brimming over with happiness."

"Strange that so simple a person should be so misunderstood."

"How many of the young ladies in the room are you in love with, I wonder?"

"I am ashamed to confess it ; but I am bound to say that, with so many worthy to be loved, I am in love with none."

"But how many of the young ladies in the room imagine that you are in love with them, do you think?"

"I can't tell, my mother," Hartley said.

Miss Hazlitt laughed outright.

"I *am* older than you," she said ; "and I have a couple of eyes."

"And very good eyes, I think," Hartley said ; "but I hope that they misread me."

"I don't know," she said ; "but we were going to talk about America."

So they talked about America ; and when they had finished, she said to him,

“I don’t dislike you as much as I thought I should. Good-bye.”

“Good-bye,” said Hartley, and went away, wondering at the very peculiar young lady that fate had thrown across his path.

Another person beside Miss Hazlitt had been observing Hartley all this evening. This person was Etta, to whose presence on such occasions (for he had met her more than once or twice at evening parties) Hartley had by this time grown accustomed. He had grow accustomed to Etta ; but she, if by it be meant indifferent, had by no means grown accustomed to his presence. Rather, every time she saw him her irritation and her pain grew greater. This evening she had watched him as he carried himself gaily about the room. A score of girls’ faces, more or less, sweet and fair, brightened as he approached them. He was more widely a favourite than ever. The old spontaneous *manner* was with him still, however that which of old lay behind it might have departed. Etta saw him pass from one to another, and every now and then his light laugh, or his flattering or play-

ful speech, caught her ear ; yet all the time she saw that his heart was not touched by a word he said, and that scarcely any one to whom he spoke left a moment's impression upon his mind.

“ And I was one of those poor fools,” she said, “ and flattered myself that that radiance shone alone upon me ;” and her sense of humiliation and her bitterness of heart almost choked her as she thought of how she had surrendered herself to this light-hearted traitor, as she held him, in the past ; and then of her lawful husband, to whom no girl in the room would care to speak a second word but that he was worth three or four thousand a-year. Only while Hartley was talking with Miss Hazlitt was the mood of her anger at all changed ; but whether the change was for the better or the worse, it would have been hard at this point to say.

It was not many evenings before Hartley was again at a party, at which both Etta and Miss Hazlitt were present. He saw both at once, but not until late in the evening did he make his way to the latter.



"I thought you had quite forgotten me," she said.

"I have learned the best times to choose for the best talks," he answered.

Miss Hazlitt smiled.

"Do you want a seat?"

"Yes; I couldn't move another inch if I were to be paid for it."

"It is rather trying to have you so late in the evening; one wonders how often the things you will say have been said already."

"That is easily told. As often as I have talked to any one just like my present companion."

"That is a two-edged compliment."

"The smooth edge is for you, by your leave."

"Thank you. I have been thinking a good deal about you since we last met. I heard a story about you the other day. I had heard it before; but last time it was told I made a sort of random defence of you. I wonder if I was very foolish to do so."

"I hope not. The smallest person is exposed to gossip, and it is always kind to de-



fend the absent. I hope the story was not much to my discredit."

"It was not in your favour, certainly; and my defence of you was made purely upon faith. I should like to be *sure*," she added, interrogatively.

"I don't know what the story was," said Hartley, a good deal against his will.

"Well, I'll tell you. It was that you had jilted a lady, who, to be sure, has since consoled herself in a very substantial manner. Four thousand a-year heals many woes. Is it true? Of course you need not answer unless you please; but I take interest enough in you to care to respect you. So tell me, if you like."

As Miss Hazlitt spoke, she glanced across the room to where Etta happened to be sitting. As it happened, too, Etta's husband was standing and looking at Hartley (and consequently at Miss Hazlitt), as, spite of himself, he often found himself doing.

Hartley coloured at Miss Hazlitt's question, and, involuntarily, glanced at Etta (which Etta's husband also saw); and then,

partly in obedience to Etta's wish in the matter, he laughed a light laugh, and said,

“No, it is not true; nor is anything like it true.”

Miss Hazlitt thought that she had not got much of an answer, and that, if she defended Hartley in the future, it would have to be still upon faith at most that she did so.

Hartley's second conversation with Miss Hazlitt surprised him even more than the first had done. A lady who began her first conversation with him by laughing at him, and finished it by saying that she disliked him less than she thought to have done, and who, in their second conversation, demanded of him that he should confess to her whether or not he had jilted a lady, now married and present in the room, was, it must be confessed, no ordinary drawing-room phenomenon. Hartley looked again to see whether he had not mistaken her age, or whether she was not, after all, unutterably ugly, and so permitted superhuman privileges. In both matters, however, his reading was as before; she was far from

ugly, and though not a child, yet young still. Neither was she loud, bold, or fast ; and though by her appearance perfectly well able to take care of herself, yet in her way she was womanly still, even though not specially soft in her womanhood. Hartley was obliged to leave off his study by confessing that Miss Hazlitt puzzled him at present.

When the party was over, Etta and her husband went home together. Etta's moods towards her husband were rarely pleasant, and he began to grow a little weary of her unpleasant moods. This evening she was in worse temper, and he less patient with her than usual.

"You might have spared your pains in asking your old lover not to talk about you," he said.

Etta flashed almost savagely upon him.

"How dare you call any man my old lover ? And whom did I ever ask not to talk about me ?"

"I only know what you told me yourself," said her husband, coolly.

“I said nothing like either of those things,” Etta said.

“Put it how you please,” said Mr. Monsell; “all I know is that I saw Miss Hazlitt look at the fellow, and then at you; that then he coloured and looked at you, and that then he laughed. You can make out of that what you please.”

“All I make out of it is that you seem to have had one of your shrewd fits on you to-night, in which state you are, if possible, more trying than at your stupid times,” said Etta, scornfully; but to herself she said—  
“If he dared to make ridicule of me, after bringing me to what I am, then I would never rest until I killed him, or worse!”

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE news of the Walcote Mine Company spread gradually, and came, as a matter of course, soonest to the ears or the notice of those whom old interest connected with the place. Among those who earliest learned of the new scheme were Geoffrey, Beata, and Robert.

"My hundred and fifty pounds is burning a hole in my pocket," Geoffrey said to Beata.

"Poor fellow!"

"So I think I'll speculate with it."

"*Speculate!*"

"Yes. The fact is, I'm longing to have an interest in the old place again, and I want to buy some of the shares in the new mine company."

"Do you? I don't think I would. What does Mr. Winthrop say about it?"

“I haven’t asked him yet, of course. One always comes to one’s mate first. But I don’t think his opinion would much affect me. It’s a speculation, I know, but I’ve a fancy to make it.”

“It’s very queer, Geoffrey ; I should never have thought of you as a speculator.”

“No, nor I of myself as one. But, as I say, my heart leans towards the old place, and I have no use for the money at present.”

“Well,” said Beata, “you know best. Shall I put mine in too?”

“No ; keep yours. I would not use mine for the purpose if there were any chance of your wanting it ; but your own, with what you had before, makes you safe.”

So Geoffrey took up six shares in the new company, paid the first call, and put by the rest of the money for future calls as they came.

It was not many days after this that Mr. Winthrop received the following note from Robert :—

“DEAR UNCLE,—As I suppose you are

concerned in it, please secure me ten shares in your new mine company.

“Yours affectionately,  
“ROBERT PLAYFAIR.”

To which Mr. Winthrop returned answer :

“DEAR ROBERT,—As I am not a madman, I have nothing to do with the new company. I shall *not* do anything about securing shares for you.

“Yours affectionately,  
“GEORGE WINTHROP.”

Robert wrote again :—

“DEAR UNCLE,—I am sorry you are not supporting the cause. I have taken up the shares.

“Yours affectionately,  
“ROBERT PLAYFAIR.”

Mr. Winthrop wrote again :—

“DEAR ROBERT,—You are more stupid than I took you to be. Of course you know that Beata and all the rest of the old pro-

prietors have sold their interest in the mine.

“Yours affectionately,

“GEORGE WINTHROP.”

To which Robert once more made answer :

“DEAR UNCLE,—Why didn’t you give your last piece of information first? However, I have taken the shares, and shall keep to them for auld lang syne.

“Yours affectionately,

“ROBERT PLAYFAIR.”

Hartley’s lawyer was energetic, and he sowed prospectuses far and wide. As was natural, he sent them to all the well-to-do men of whom he knew, and among these was Mr. Monsell. The prospectus was taking, and Mr. Monsell had a few hundreds just then disengaged. So he, too, applied for some shares and got them ; and it gave Hartley a little start when he saw the name of Etta’s husband among those who were to rebuild his fortune in lordlier dimensions than of old.

Thus, in a financial speculation, the old



love-tissue was once more re-woven, and, mediately or immediately, the interests of Hartley and Geoffrey, Beata, Robert, and Etta formed threads in the same figure of the great fabric of life.

Yet most of these had no knowledge of the re-knitting of their interests. Hartley was, of course, not a director of the company, and so he knew only occasionally and accidentally by whom the shares were taken ; while, on the other hand, though his ownership of the mine was by this time necessarily known to those whom it concerned, these did not comprise the mass of ordinary shareholders. Thus it was that neither did Hartley know, nor did these others, that their lives were thus, in this new fashion, interwoven.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

IT was about six months after Geoffrey had last seen his child, when he was one morning startled by seeing upon his breakfast-table, when he came down, a letter with a direction in the handwriting of Mary. He took up the letter and found a country post-mark upon it, and then with a hand tremulous with excitement he opened it. After the dating it ran thus :—

“ We are here for a few days before going abroad for some months. If you could come down to us for a day, your child and I would like to see you. Come on Wednesday, as early as you can.

“ Ever your sincere

“ MARY.”

Geoffrey put the letter down, his heart

palpitating with his strange and sudden happiness. He did not picture it much, but stood wondering why Mary had said "your child"—how she knew that that was his name for her—and wondering, too, whether by accident or design she had chosen Wednesday, already his sacred day (for on that day he had had all his best times with his child), for this sudden happiness.

He sat down to breakfast, and in a soft, dreamy way he ate and drank, handling the very food he took with a reverent touch.

Then, as always, whatever happened, he set to work. The work was not irksome. To-morrow he was to go to his darling. He was not impatient. He could have waited a month quite happily, with a sight of her sweet face at the end. At first it did not enter his mind that he would write. Of course they knew that he would come. But then he thought that he had better send a word, lest they might fancy that he had not received the letter. So he left off his work to write, and then he began again. He did

not do much that day, though he kept steadily on. His emotions set in another direction, and only some glances of the great happiness of his heart, touching his thoughts here and there with dainty scintillations of beauty, made this day's work in any way remarkable.

A long dreamy day, and a night broken a hundred times by the up-welling of his joy, and then came the morrow. He had a very early breakfast, and set off, and before eleven o'clock he reached the house where the sisters were staying. The servant who opened the door was expecting him, and he was shown into a room, and Mary came to him.

They shook hands, and then she said,

"I think I have done right in sending for you. My uncle and most other people would say that I had done very wrong, I know. The dear friend with whom we are staying thinks me right, and I am glad ; but I should have done it without her support, had I seen the way. Our father is in India, as you know, and our mother is dead ; so who should be good to my darling, if I am not. I do not

know what can come of it, and you will understand that nothing is settled until my father comes home. But she would have died if we had gone abroad without seeing you; so I cannot be wrong in sending for you. I know that you love her tenderly. Now I will take you to her."

They went together to another room, and Mary opened the door, and went in with Geoffrey for a moment, and then saying, "I will come again presently," left the room.

Elia sat on a low seat by the window. As Geoffrey entered, she rose and came towards him, and put herself close by his side. He took her hand in his and led her back towards the window, where was an easy-chair. He sat in that, and drew her low seat to his side, and she sat down, and they were together, looking into each other's faces. He held both her hands together in one of his, resting them upon his knee, and with the other hand he smoothed back the soft, brown hair from her sweet, fair face, and her dear eyes yearned into his.

She was taller and thinner, and very

pale. The sad, longing look that he had seen growing day by day in his dream-face was there, just as he knew it would be, showing through her happiness. Yet the joy was stronger, and it trembled out of the soft, earnest eyes, and her most meek and tender mouth, until it made him wonder to see it.

They had not spoken, but there was no shyness between them now. He drew her face to him, and kissed her. As her lips touched his, and her face surrendered itself to his tenderness, a great awe fell upon him; and when her face lay upon his breast, and *his* face rested softly upon hers, he knew that the consecration of his life was accomplished.

There was no shyness between them, yet they did not want to speak. But presently Geoffrey said,

“I never thought to be so happy as this, my darling.”

“No,” she said; “I did not know that any one *could* be as happy.”

As she spoke, she lifted her head from

his bosom, and they sat as before, his hand holding both hers upon his knee, and her face looking up into his. There was no need of many caresses between them, save only that he could not keep his hand from pushing back the soft hair from the sweet face that yearned so meekly upon him.

It was wonderful how little need there seemed to be of words between them. That richest and deepest communion of kindred souls wholly known to each other—the communion of silence, that is—was theirs, though of words personal between them none had ever passed since first they met. Until now, he had been her dear teacher, no more; she had been his sweet pupil, no more. All their communion, hitherto, had been impersonal, the communion of this relation alone. Yet now, when for the first time they met, heart to heart, with no pretext of meeting but their love, they could be silent, and in silence could be satisfied.

“Your sister called you ‘my child,’” he said; “how did she know that that was my name for you?”

"I told her."

"But how did *you* know?"

"Aileen told me that day we had tea in your sister's room."

"And did you think me very bold, little one?"

"Ah, no; how could I think you bold? I have been your child ever since you first came to teach me."

"And what was your name for me, I wonder?"

"I had not any name for you."

"You never spoke of me, then?"

Her own laugh rippled out.

"My sister and I called you 'he;' we did not want any other name for you."

Geoffrey's eyes dimmed at that. Could there be any completer proof of how his child had filled her whole heart and mind with him, he thought.

Then they talked of the two happy years of their work. She told him a little of what her life had been before his coming; of all her sister had been to her as a most gentle and yielding sister and a<sup>3</sup> most wise



and thoughtful mother in one. The completeness of the love of these two moved Geoffrey more than he could express, though he had seen it from the first. Then she told him of their loneliness, except in the love that was between them, since their father went away. A mother's love, except through faintest traces of memory, she had not known.

"And then," she said, "you came, and we began to be so very happy, and to look forward to Wednesday as the day of days. My sister was as glad of your coming as I was, in a way; but then——"

"But, then, she was not my child," he said.

"No," she said, softly, as speaking to her own heart rather than to him.

"And you were my child from the very first?"

"Yes, but I did not know whether you thought so too. I used to think how happy it would have been to be your sister Beata, or Aileen; and when I came to your rooms that day, I longed so that I could be your maid, and wait upon you. But it is better

still to be your child. Did you think I was your child, at first?"

Then Geoffrey told her what she had been to him from the time he began to teach her. And as she learned how she had filled his heart, and sanctified his spirit, and warmed into joy a life that had been nearly all sad, how she had coloured all his thinkings and possessed his life by her presence, she wondered more and more, as such meek hearts are apt to wonder at their own graciousness; and her head drooped, and the tears ran down her face, and Geoffrey had to kiss the dear eyes into brightness again, and cherish her back to a calm that excess of joy had broken.

Then she bade him tell her the story of his own early life. "We knew at once," she said, "that the past had been very different with you, and we were so sorry, even that first day——" And then she did not know how to finish her sentence, and Geoffrey did not ask it of her, and felt no flash of anger, even, against the uncle, seeing that this once, at least, he had served a use-

ful purpose as a foil to his child's sweetness.

And, as she bade him, he told her the story of his early life—of the years spent with his mother ; of that mother's sweetness and lovingness, and of her death ; of the years after with his father alone, and then of his life at the Rectory, with the old man, and Beata, and Aileen and Hartley. She was moved by it all, and caught the tone of sadness that belonged even more to him than to it. Yet the story itself was such as she had expected ; it endorsed her heart-knowledge of him ; it in no way changed it.

They came back to their own times together.

"Have you read the new book?" he said.

She laughed out this time. "We began it the day it was published."

"But how did you get it?"

She told him how they had got it, and the story was full of touches of cleverness and heart-ingenuity that would not be thwarted. The thing had not been very mirthful in the doing, for the time was the sad one soon after Geoffrey had left them,

but it became mirthful in the telling. And, for the first time, Geoffrey saw his child in one of her bright and light-hearted moods; and the new modulations of her voice, and the play of her face, and the touches of childish humour in her language, and the manifold ripple of her heart-possessing laugh, filled up her picture for him wonderfully, and made him richer beyond counting.

Then they talked over the book itself, and he made her tell him all her thoughts about it, and the parts that she had liked least and best. There were no parts she liked least, she said, but there were best parts. And which were they? he asked; but she could not remember them all. She had the book in her room; should she go and fetch it? she asked, hesitatingly; and he hesitated much more to let her go, even for a moment. But then he thought of the pleasure it would be afterwards to have gone through the book with her, and he sent her.

While she was gone, the room seemed

strangely naked and empty, and he dreaded lest some one should come in and blur the sanctity of the time. But she came back in a minute, even though she had stepped into her sister's room as she passed, with the book in her hand, and the inner radiance shining through her face, to kiss her sister in silence. She came back, and they went through the book together, and she showed him the parts that she loved best, and he showed her the parts that were born of her love and her sweet nature—parts that had been so full of pain to him when his book was born, but were now filled with the joy that by right belonged to them, as if the lost mother of a new-born darling should presently come back from the dead. And then, when they had gone through it, he begged of her her copy, that the identification of his two beloveds might be complete in his heart; and she thought herself richly repaid for her loss by the promise of *his* copy to be sent to her as soon as ever he should reach his home.

Of the bitter time of their separation they

did not speak, except to tell each other that *that* made to them the revelation of the great need which their love had created. "The old time," he said to her, "completely satisfied me. To see you sometimes, to have my heart filled with your presence, to feel you leaning on me, and loving me somewhat—to be working for you, thinking for you, enjoying for you, and teaching you as my dear child, seemed all that I wanted, or could ask. I think I could have gone to my death day, blessing God to have you so, for you made my life very rich and holy, my darling. That day you came to my room, my heart seemed too full of exaltation and joy at having the right to love you so, and to be near you as your dear teacher and friend, learning from you so much more than I taught, and I could but pray God to make me, through you, as holy as I was happy. Then the separation came, and it seemed that I had lost my child. But I have not lost her, thank God, and I *cannot* lose her now, whatever happens!"

She could not answer many words to all

this. Her heart had been like his. She had wanted to be his child, no more, nor less. But the need had grown mightier now. She must be his, entirely, or die. She must live in his heart; her life must be taken into his. She had no life left apart from him.

As his child spoke, Geoffrey understood the fulness of the change that had come upon her. In all other things she was a child still; in the greatness of her need, six months of quiet had made her a woman. To him a return of the old relation would have brought much of content. To her, it would have brought none. Her needs had grown mightier; her whole life must be taken into his.

And while, for a moment, this change awed him, in a moment his heart rose to its level, and he saw beyond him the possibility of a future such as it had never entered into his mind to conceive for himself. By the very make of all but the deepest elements of his nature, by his health, by the history through which his life had passed, it seemed to be determined that that most sweet relation



which had been between himself and his child should be the intensest to which his life should rise. But now all this was changed. His child had reached up to an intenser level of emotion, had set her heart upon a mightier espousal of souls, and *his* heart rose at a bound to the level of her conception. In a moment he shook himself free from the limitations within which the accidents of his life had enclosed him, and he stood out a full man as God had made him. Then he kissed his child, his darling, again, and the kiss was the betrothal to a divine marriage of two souls whom God had made for each other.

It was two o'clock, and Mary came to call them to lunch. The break was not untimely, for they had passed through much in those three hours. There would be no one to meet at lunch but the lady of the house, Mary's and Elia's friend. So they went in together. Not much was said by Geoffrey, or by any, yet enough by him to show how he thanked and honoured this lady who could hold in higher esteem the true love



which God gives, than the precautions by which men hedge in the false love which the devil gives. Enough to show this, he said. For the rest, he ate, being hungry ; and took his share in such kindly converse as the conditions of their meeting made possible. He spoke to his child scarcely at all, for he could not shape his voice to any tones, to her, but those of tenderness, and of such tones he was chary before even this most kindly stranger.

They went back to their place for an hour or two more of communion, though he was to leave before dinner. Hitherto their talk had been all of the past ; now they turned their faces towards the future.

“ You are pale, my darling, and thin.”

She looked penitently at him, as though she had sinned, and knew it.

“ And do you mean to keep pale and thin ? ”

“ No,” she said ; “ it will be so different, now.”

“ Yes, thank God ! dear one. And you will take care to sleep and to eat enough,

and to do all things to make yourself strong and well, that my dream-face may not sadden me all the day through."

She made him every promise that he required of her.

"And you will never feel lonely or sad."

Her face pleaded against this promise.

"I will *try* not to be so," she said.

"It is all so sure," he said, "that there is no room for loneliness. There *can* be no change between us."

"No," she said. She was as sure of that as though God had said it. "If only it is not too long before I see you, I can be brave," she said.

"I trust it will not be long, my darling. As soon as your father comes home, I will go to him, and then I hope that God will be good to us."

"*God* will be good," she said, "for I shall come to you some day, whatever happens ; but I hope my father may be good, that it may be soon."

There was no weakness in her love. She knew all that she would do, if her dear mas-

ter would take her. To him and to her love she would render all obedience. The sweet meek face was as strong as death in this. When separation and grief had ripened and had revealed to her her love, her love became unconquerable strength for ever.

As the time drew near for him to leave her, Elia became silent again. The old desolation was not to return, she knew ; but the thought that he must leave her, and that she would see his face no more for a vague and weary time, almost brought back the old pain again, and struck all the new-born joy clean out of her face. He strove to bring back her smile by happy pictures of the future, and *she* strove to be cheered by his loving words. But the striving was pitiful work, for the deep sense of loneliness and longing that already cast its shadow over her could not be conquered. She sat by his side, her hands and lips cold with the coming pain, and her present happiness was already over in the thought that it so soon must end.

Then Geoffrey left her a little, to go and

talk with Mary, that he might return and have the last moments with his child.

“ You understand that I could not help sending for you,” Mary said ; “ I could not let my darling die, though I have striven to obey my uncle, for our father’s sake. When he comes home, my responsibility will be over, and I shall be very thankful. I am too young, and altogether unfit to have this great care upon me ; but I would lay down my life for my darling.”

She said again : “ I would have written to my father ; but it would have done nothing but harm. He trusts much to my uncle ; and I was glad, on any terms, not to have it spoken of to him. When he comes home, we will tell him all, and his own heart and mind will judge for themselves. I pray God that all may be well.”

“ We must not write to you or hear from you while we are abroad,” she said ; “ our duty to our father demands this, I think, and our darling will be able to go on now. She thinks as I do about this, though it has been a hard battle for us.”

There was no more to say. Geoffrey tried to shape his thanks to this sweet sister of his darling, and failed. Though he had known Beata and his child, he marvelled at the beauty of her nature, grave in its child-like simplicity with the burden of her love and care.

“Good-bye,” she said ; “ God bless you, always!” And then he went back to his child.

She waited for him, sitting just as he had left her. There was no more heart left in her. The happiness of the present was altogether swallowed up in the pain of the parting that had now but come. He was her life ; without him she could but go mourning all the day. Yet she still owned that it would be very different from the terrible time that was gone. He filled her mind with things that she must do for herself and for him, both for their love. He strove to fill her with the thought that the whole time till their new life began was but a time of preparation for that new life. In the fulness of their expectation, he said, they should half forget their present separation. And he

knew that her faithful nature would take up this thought, when the first sharp pain of parting was over. Her love had in it that completeness, that she would be able to half master her sorrow, at his command, now that she was truly and entirely his. So he had large hope for his darling, until God should give her into his keeping; and this hope made him strong, even for her sake, to bear the parting that now had come.

He took her into his arms, and kissed the meek, blessed face, fuller of love than he had dreamed a face could be; and then she went with him to the door, and, at his bidding, she gathered him a handful of flowers, and so he left her, and her face yearned upon him until the trees hid her from his sight.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

ON his journey home, Geoffrey had the good fortune to get a compartment to himself, and the two hours of that best of all quiet when the mind is filled with possessing thoughts and intense emotion, so calmed and strengthened him that he was able to call in on Beata on his road to his own rooms.

The day before, he had sent her Mary's note, and so this night she was half-expecting and greatly hoping that he would come. It was eight o'clock before he reached her rooms, and she had almost given him up.

His entrance gladdened her beyond expression, even before he had spoken a word. She could see the deep joy shining out of his face, and for her own happiness she could scarcely have been more glad than she was for his.

There was much of all that had passed that he could tell her. She was very glad indeed that she had seen his child, because it enabled her so much better to understand all that he told, and all that he did not tell. Among the things that he *did* tell, was his conversation with Mary; and through that Beata knew what must be the attitude of his life for the next few months.

When he had finished all that he had to tell her, she could not help saying,

“You see, dear, that my instinct was right, after all. I felt sure that your child could not be lost to you so.”

“Yes, Beata; you were right; though it was very hard to see, then.”

“Yes, it was hard; so hard, that I lost faith in my own seeings. It is so easy to see the right or the true thing just at first; so hard to keep on seeing when the darkness comes.”

Beata was thinking of her own sorrow, and of the doubts that so often came over what, when the light shone, she knew to be right. Geoffrey did not know her thought; but his words answered it.



“The great thing is to be patient, and wait,” he said; “the true seeing is proved true in time, if we do that, and then there is no fear of our spoiling God’s handy-work. I am so grateful that this new happiness was not won by my own act; for if it had been so, I should have been in constant terror of the pain that might grow out of it, though not for myself, as you know. But now my child’s great need of me covers all risks, and the future lies in God’s hands, who has begun it. For me, no pain could blot out this day’s joy from my heart.”

Then Geoffrey went home, and took from his pocket her copy of his book, which his child had given him, and wrote his name in it under hers, and found all the passages which she had pointed out to him as her “best parts,” and placed next them one after another of the flowers she had given him, keeping yet some to make his room fragrant, and rich with their beauty. Then he got out his own copy of his book, and wrote his child’s name under his, and marked the passages that were born of her influence and

spirit, and put one of her own flowers inside it, and wrapped it up carefully, that it might be ready to go by the first post the next day. And then he went to bed, and lay for a long time, with his candle still burning, thinking of his darling, and looking at the beautiful lines which, long ago now, it seemed, she had illuminated to make his birthday happy, and to sanctify the thoughts of his nights. Then he put his light out, and went to sleep; and in the morning, when he awoke, his heart was so full of the great joy that had fallen upon his life, that to him, whose nature had hitherto been tuned to the key of sadness, the whole world seemed radiant with the blessed smile of God.

## CHAPTER XXV.

THE affairs of the Walcote Mining Company, and therein of Hartley Leighton, Esquire, owner of the mine, prospered. The shares of the company continued to be steadily taken up, and the working of the mine—that is to say, the sinking of a new and deeper shaft—was commenced.

As will be easily imagined, the second half of Hartley's capital underwent a process of rapid dissolution during the interval between the purchase of the mine and the time when the company was fairly set on its feet. In such work as filled this interval money flies rapidly ; and before the end of it came, Hartley had not fifty pounds left. But this fact did not disturb him. The mine was a reality, the company was an accomplished thing, and income, if not fortune, lay before him.

The terms upon which it was finally agreed that the company should have the right of working the mine were these: First, a royalty of seven per cent on the gross produce of the mine should be paid him; and secondly, two hundred fully paid-up shares were to be allotted to him free of cost. By this arrangement part would come to him from the very fact of the mine being worked at all, and part only after a real profit had been earned. In no case, save in that of the entire collapse of the mine, could he altogether fail to be the gainer by it.

Hartley was one not easily taken by surprise in whatever position he might find himself. Yet on the day when this final draft of the agreement was sent him for his signature, he did sit down and wonder at the curious oscillations which his fortune had undergone. He was now twenty-five years old. Three years ago he was a young man for whom life had worn but its most ordinary aspects. During those three years he had been ruined, and placed out in the world to make his fortune for himself; he

had made that fortune and resigned it ; he had gone to America to make another fortune and had missed it ; lacking bread-and-butter he had gone to the gold-fields to earn it, and had there made another, though a seedling fortune ; he had come home to plant his seedling, whose green tops had dried down in the process, and he had now to wait to see whether it would spring up again and grow into a goodly tree for him, or simply rot in the ground, to nourish, perhaps, other people's seedlings, but to put out green leaves of promise no more for him for ever. If the former of these was the fate of his seedling, then his life had been a great success, he said ; but if the latter were its doom, then what other new world would open for him, he wondered, and how much heart would he have left to begin the world once again ?

As Hartley finished his reverie he sighed, and the sigh clung as much around the thought of the success which, hypothetically, his life had achieved, as of the possible failure that awaited him. Hartley sighed, be-

cause his good angel, not yet grieved to utter silence, touched his heart. He sighed, because there came over him the vision of the inner cost at which the success, which seemed to be before him, had been purchased. Such a career as Hartley's is the severest ordeal through which a man can be put. To be torn from the ground in which the heart's roots for many years have grown, and to be planted in a new soil ; to take root quickly and bloom in that soil ; to be torn away again and replanted, and again torn and replanted—this is an ordeal that endangers the heart's roots altogether, and tends to make it grow only within and upon itself. Also, in all these various transplantings, to bloom easily and without falter, is, or may be, to learn to make light of even the sunshine of heaven. A career of constant change, and of prosperity in every new condition, may easily sever the heart's attachments from man and God. This it *will* do, unless, by self-forgetting love and constant prayer, the heart cultivates its attachments. *With* this loyalty the severity of the ordeal

brings to pass a richer union with man and God than any quieter and less shaken life could accomplish. Without this loyalty the heart grows Satanic, and lives centred upon and within itself.

Hartley sighed as, vaguely, this truth and its demonstration in his own life glimmered upon him, and in shadowy outline the picture of his long drifting away from love passed before him. He had had loves once—those who loved him, and whom in some sort he loved. Now he loved no one, and whether anyone loved him, he neither knew nor cared. So, though he sighed, his sorrow was a sorrow not unto repentance. The heart from whom God has taken its loves turns to God, with whom love abides. The heart that turns away from its loves turns away from God, in whom love centres. Hartley's earth-loves had been mediators between him and heaven; he had turned his back upon both, and nothing better than success in life lay before him.

Hartley's good angel had touched his heart with a vision of its loss. He had



glanced at the sad picture, and had sighed. But the sigh had in it no ring of repentance, but rather, as he sighed, he called up before him thoughts of self-justifying anger; and the vision passed, and he remained the worse man by the might of the grace of God, which he had resisted. Then he set his face more steadily towards his hopes of success in life, though still the sadness of the vision was upon him.

One other battle there was that had to be fought out in Hartley's mind concerning the agreement that lay before him. To the agreement there was a preamble, and in that preamble was set forth the history of the geologic investigations which had led to and justified the formation of the company. Now, as has been said, the second, and more eminent of the opinions which had been procured concerning the prospects of the mine, had been favourable only with a qualification. In the preliminary circular which had been issued to set on foot the formation of the company, extracts only from the geologic opinions had been set



down, and among these extracts the qualifying clause of the second opinion was not included. Later, when the board was in course of formation, the written opinions themselves had been produced, and those who read them now, for the first time, were not unimpressed by the weakening effect of the new clause. But bodies of men are dull-witted, and the thing passed; and because bodies of men are dull of conscience, as well as of wit, when the prospectus was drawn up, the qualifying clause was also left out. For some reason the written opinions were returned to Hartley; and when, now, the agreement was drawn up, by somebody's ignorance or carelessness, the old dishonest curtailment was perpetuated, and from the preamble of the agreement, as well as from the previous documents, the clause was omitted, and the opinions of both geologists were set down as absolutely favourable to the re-opening of the mine.

Hartley read through the agreement and saw the omission. It startled him, at first, and made his face flush. The preamble

read splendidly without it ; its introduction would half-spoil the preamble. But the preamble practically was an imposition. What should he do ? Should he send back the agreement, and point out how it needed altering ? What would come of his act if he did ? Delay for certain ; how much more no one could say. The clause *in* would have been one thing in its effect upon people's minds ; the clause *put* in would be quite another. Was it his business thus to magnify the defects of his own position ? He had not left the clause out ; those whom it most concerned had done that. Suppose nothing but delay to result, if he did send the document back for alteration—even so, he was impatient of delay ; he had waited long enough already. Suppose worse than delay to happen from his playing censor upon his own case ; what then ? Yet the preamble practically was an imposition, and he knew it. People were fools to muddle so. He could not tell what to do. He would not sign till he came home at

night. He should have time to think before then.

It was in the evening of this day that Hartley again met Miss Hazlitt. He had been very busy all day, and was half inclined to excuse himself from the engagement to go out this evening. However, at the last moment he thought that he would go for an hour, perhaps, and he went. There were many people in the room whom he knew beside Miss Hazlitt, but he passed as lightly as possible by the rest of them, and made to her side as soon as he could. She smiled as he came up to her, and made room for him by her side.

“You look tired,” she said.

“I *am* tired; I have been working very hard.”

“You working very hard! What at, I wonder?”

“What at? At making my fortune, of course, or trying to do so. Who works at anything else?”

“What sort of thing is a fortune?” said Miss Hazlitt. “Is four thousand a year a

fortune, with Mr. Monsell as a part of it?"

"You seem fond of that topic," Hartley said.

"It interests me. I had a conversation with Mr. Monsell two or three evenings ago. I mentioned your name incidentally. I am afraid that he does not love you."

"He ought," said Hartley, "I gave"—  
"him his wife," he was going to add; for the devil seemed to have so much possession of him since his reverie, that he did not care to hide his sins even from himself.

"You gave him what?" said Miss Hazlitt.

"Nothing; I wish you were not so fond of so stupid a subject."

"Marriage, and fortune, and gifts such as yours, can hardly make up a stupid subject," Miss Hazlitt said, "and besides, they seem part of my interest in you."

"You take interest in me?"

"Yes; I told you so."

"Why, I wonder?"

"M-m! Perhaps I shall tell you some day. But you are trying to make your fortune, you say. How, I wonder?"

"Perhaps I shall tell you some day," said Hartley, coolly.

"You think that I was impertinent to ask?"

"Not impertinent; but I thought the same date would be suitable for both tellings. If you think the present a good date, I will answer your question first, though mine was put first."

"You are generous; but I make no bargain. You shall tell me all about your fortune-making, or not, exactly as you please."

"Would you help me in my fortune-making, if you could?"

"I don't know. It depends partly upon how much it would inconvenience me to do so. How could I help you?"

Hartley flushed inwardly. Satan was in him, and the devil of success in life beckoned him on.

"There is no one could help me so much," he said.

Miss Hazlitt's face coloured just a little, but she looked at him quietly, and repeated,

"How could I help you?"

"You could help me with your mind."

"So!" Miss Hazlitt said, her face colouring rather more.

"And with your fortune."

"So; and have in return——"

"*My* mind and *my* fortune."

"These to go with the hand in each case, I suppose?"

"Even so."

"The heart you do not mention."

"That follows, with wise people, I think."

"With Mr. Monsell and his wife, for instance."

"I said with *wise* people; Mr. Monsell is a fool."

"This is the fifth time we have met. You are a brave man, or a rash one."

"You asked me questions, and I answered, that is all."

"It is true. I do not say that I blame you. May I ask whether you intended to say as much to me when you came this evening?"

"I did not?"

"A sudden impulse; not less flattering, so, I think."

"Our intercourse has been exceptional before to-night," Hartley said.

"It is true. I do not say that I blame you."

"And you answer me—how?"

"I cannot tell, Mr. Leighton. You have made me a fair offer; but it is rather unexpected, and I must think about it."

"When will you answer me?"

"I cannot tell. It is a grave question. You must give me time. You must also, I think, suffer me to be the one to return to the subject when my mind is ready."

"You *will* return to it?"

"Surely, if we live, I will return to it. Till I do so, we will meet as before. Good-bye, now."

Hartley left her, and before long went home to his rooms, with much fresh matter for reverie. This time his good angel had no part in his thinkings. He had just asked a woman to be his wife for whom he did not persuade himself that he had one spark of love, and to ask whom it had, an hour before, never entered his mind. Yet in all



his thoughts there was no touch of shame or self-reproach, no awe at the sanctities which he had profaned. No pleading face of Beata, no angry face of Etta, no warning words of Geoffrey troubled his mind. His thoughts were all of the future, and of success in life. But this time success in life had for him a still wider outlook. The possibilities of the Walcote Mine Company no longer summed up his hopes. When Miss Hazlitt's answer came, he should know whether a very great career might not lie before him, for he felt that he had power to make use of large materials. That Miss Hazlitt's answer was altogether doubtful, he quite well understood, and, indeed, he felt it to be beyond his power to guess in what direction her mind was moving. The woman was an enigma to him; clever she was, and interesting she was—that he knew; but what real character underlay these surface qualities, or how at bottom she regarded him, he could not even conjecture. Yet about his suspense there was no emotion. The card of a marriage venture with her had come



into his hand, and, as though he were the most experienced of gamblers, he had played it coolly. If it won him the trick, he would be right glad, for then a great game would be within his grasp. But the card was an unexpected turn-up; he had built no hopes upon it, and so, though he very much wished to win, there was no emotion about his suspense.

The day had been a long and a busy one; Hartley had had no leisure to think of what he would do about the agreement, and the missing clause in its preamble. By the time that he had finished his reverie upon the doings of the evening, it was midnight, and he was very tired; but the agreement had to be sent off in the morning. So he got it out and read it through, and had well-nigh fallen into deep thought again. But he stopped short of deep thought, and taking up a pen quickly, he signed the agreement, and at once prepared for bed. When one o'clock struck, he had been asleep more than half an hour, and his repose was as dreamless as the soft slumber of infancy.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

IT has been recorded how Robert Playfair received his quietus. That by that quietus he was by no means quieted, needs not to be recorded. The human heart is of all things the most inconsequential, and no other thing is so sure about it save that it will not do or be that from which the logic of circumstances seems to have left it no escape.

After his interview with Beata the only rational state of feeling left for Robert was one of quiet despair. With the perversity of self-torturing humanity, he adopted the substantive, and left the qualifying and comforting adjective altogether out of his account. Robert was by no means quiet, but rather, though he had not a spark of hope left, he beat his wings against the prison bars of his despair in a way that made even

himself wonder whether his whole nature was turned upside down.

It was while he was in this state of mind that he happened one day to meet Hartley in the street. He sprang to him as though he had been a dear and old friend, and not even Hartley's manner of indifferent surprise could throw him wholly off.

"I heard you were gone abroad," he said.

"You heard the truth. But also I have come back."

"When did you return? Are you living in London now?"

Hartley answered him both questions.

"Will you come and see me?" said Robert; "I am staying at Morley's for a week or two more. I should be very glad to have a long talk with you."

Hartley said that he was very busy, and could not promise to go, but that he would do so if he could.

"I hope you will," said Robert; and they parted.

Robert walked on as if some really good thing had happened to him. Hartley's voice

was a breath of the dear old sad, happy time—a healing handkerchief, so to say, that had touched the person of Beata. So much he would have felt whoever, from the old Walcote home, had crossed his path. But at meeting Hartley he felt more. Hartley too loved Beata, he thought, and must be sad in proportion to his love. They were fellow-sufferers together in a most holy martyrdom ; they should needs love each other, and give each other the comfort of their sympathy. So Robert felt, and his heart moved towards Hartley.

Hartley went on his way, wondering why in the world Robert should be so warm to him. They had not had an hour's conversation together in their lives, and he, for his part, had never greatly liked the man. He did not think it very probable that he should find his way to Morley's within the next week or two.

But a few evenings after, having on his hands an hour or two in which he had nothing to do, and not knowing how to spend them, Hartley lazily thought that he would

just stroll along and see what Robert had to say for himself. There had been a time when this would have been impossible—when his irritation every time the thought of Beata and the old life came back to him would have prevented him, and above all would have prevented him in a half-lazy mood, from accepting such an invitation as Robert's. But that time had gone by. The old life had ceased to have the power even to anger him now. So he went down to Morley's.

Robert was in, and received him eagerly.

"I am so very glad you have come," he said; "I had almost given you up."

Hartley excused himself lightly for his delay, and did not state that at the first he had had no intention of coming at all.

Robert had got his guest, and was very glad to have him; but, as he found, he did not quite know what to do with him. They could converse, of course, but the subject was the difficulty. Between these two it might have been thought there was enough in common for an hour's chat; but that

which they had in common was the very matter upon which, for the one's sake or the other's, they could not talk. This Robert understood, yet with all his caution he went near to treading upon Hartley's toes more than once. At last, as a sure resource, they fell upon business, and Robert was about to tell Hartley that he had taken up shares in the new mine company. He did not know how largely interested Hartley was in this company, but he thought that he had better hold his peace ; and, after a little, their conversation worked itself out.

"Well, I must go," said Hartley ; "I shall get a scolding from Mrs. Truman, as it is. I was engaged to a party there at ten."

"Truman," said Robert ; "are they friends of the Winthrops ?"

"I believe they are," said Hartley. He had, in fact, been introduced to them by Mr. Winthrop when first he came to London.

"I know them," said Robert ; "I believe I'll go with you. I've had a general invitation, any time these five years. Evening

parties are not much in my line ; but somebody told me the other day that I was becoming a fossil, so I'll go into life for once. I shall get a walk with you in any case."

Hartley was not best pleased ; he was not fond of followers ; he liked to be upon his own hook ; and the reference to the Winthrops did not please him. However, he was helpless, so he said, "All right. I'll wait for you ; don't be long."

Miss Hazlitt was at the party, and saw Hartley and Robert enter together.

"Who's your friend?" she asked, when she spoke to Hartley. "I like the look of him. Will you introduce him to me?"

Hartley was less pleased than ever ; but, still, he had no escape, and he went away to fetch Robert.

"Have you known Mr. Leighton long?" Miss Hazlitt said, when they had broken the ice in orthodox fashion.

"About three years ; but some of his friends are relations of mine."

"Indeed ! You know him well, then?"



"I have not seen much of him ; but I know him pretty well, I think."

"He's very popular."

"Yes. It is no wonder. Not many men have as much to make them popular."

"No. He's good-looking and clever. Some people think that he has not over-much heart."

"Then some people don't know him."

"So ! you believe in him, then ?"

"Of course I believe in him ; I am his friend, and I have reason to know that he has a very warm and true heart."

Robert's manner flashed a little, and Miss Hazlitt smiled. "He is not of our world," she thought ; "he has very primitive notions of friendship." But she said—

"I am very glad to hear what you say ; I am his friend, too, and I shall add your good opinion of him to my own."

Robert did not answer, and Miss Hazlitt spoke again.

"He seems very well to do, though I have heard that he lost all his property some years ago."



"Yes; the mine was worked out. I know nothing about his affairs now."

"The mine, you say? What mine?"

"The Walcote Mine, near his old home."

"Ah! yes; I think I've heard of it."

Miss Hazlitt *had* heard of it, and she had heard of the new company as well. She could not help fancying that it and his business and his prosperity had some connexion with each other.

"I don't like that woman," said Robert to himself, when another introduction liberated him from her grasp. She, when she was left to her own thoughts, pondered her conversation with Robert. "A very simple and truthful man," she said; "not quite the sort of person I should have expected to be Mr. Leighton's friend. He thinks highly of his heart, it seems; that is curious and puzzling. I wonder if I've blundered, after all. I must think about it. I must think about the mine, too. I am Mr. Leighton's friend, and must needs take interest in his affairs."

"I like your friend," she said to Hartley, when they met again.

"Do you; that's right. I don't know much of him, but I certainly know nothing against him."

"He had warmer words than that for you," she said, with a touch of scorn in her manner that Hartley did not see.

The next day Miss Hazlitt wrote for a prospectus of the Walcote Mine Company, and in a day or two received it. It gave her, however, no information concerning Hartley or his connexion with the undertaking. Yet it gave her what was in the end as good. Among the names of the directors was that of one which she knew, and from him in due course she got a list of the shareholders, and the name of the owner of the mine itself. The last piece of information pleased her well, and the knowledge that Robert Playfair, Geoffrey Leighton, and Mr. Monsell were among the shareholders, she did not esteem to be altogether without value.

In a few days she met Hartley again.

"How goes the fortune-making?" she said.

"Fairly well, I hope."

"It is a large field," she said; "a successful mine is a great property."

"Oh, yes; but the Walcote Mine passed out of the hands of the old owners a good while ago."

"Out of the hands of all of them? Not quite, I think. I happen to know the name of the present owner."

"How do you know it?"

"One of the directors of the company, a friend of mine, told me."

"Did he? Well, I don't wish it to be generally known. Will you keep my confidence?"

"I'm not a chatterbox; but I make no promises. You should have *given* me your confidence, if you had wished me to keep it."

"I waited until I had the *right* to give you my confidence."

"So! But I thought we agreed that it should be left to me to return to *that* subject. Many people consider even friendship ground enough for confidence."

Hartley was inclined to think that he had made a mistake, and that he would have been wiser had he been less cautious. To have asked Miss Hazlitt to join her fate and fortune to his was so bold a stroke, that it ought to have been more boldly played. But his habit of reserve was inveterate, even though it was covered with a manner of spontaneity that made shallow observers think that he had not a thought that he would not utter. But because under that manner of spontaneousness there had always been a deep current of selfishness, therefore it was that he never uttered his deepest thoughts, and, with all his freeness of speech, his reserve was absolute.

Hartley essayed a little to repair his blunder, and to fill up for Miss Hazlitt the details of the information of which she had for herself obtained the main outlines. But she checked him. "Not now," she said; "let us wait, there is time enough by-and-by." She thought that she could find out for herself all she might very much wish to know.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

HARTLEY had now been some months in England, yet neither by accident nor design had his path crossed that quiet orbit in which the lives of Beata and Geoffrey moved on their divinely-appointed way. For the first few weeks, as has been said, those two were kept in a constant state of half-expectation that by some means they should see him. However, they did not see him, and gradually the expectation subsided, though with it did not subside the pain of the heart-separation that was between them.

Hartley's return to England caused Beata some discomfort of a lesser sort. As the reader already knows, Beata had never confided to Mrs. Winthrop the story of her great sorrow, nor of the events that had preceded her final parting with Hartley.

There had been times when Mrs. Winthrop had suspected that there was something wrong between them ; but her estimate of Hartley's and of Beata's character was such that she would have found it hard to believe that Beata could give to Hartley such love as makes the satisfaction or the sacrifice of a life. Concerning Hartley, had you asked her, and had she spoken her mind, she would have said—

“In love with Beata? Oh! yes, no doubt, and with every other pretty girl he comes across, as long as he does not remain too many hours at once out of her presence. Never you fear that Hartley will be deeply enough in love to injure his digestion or his peace of mind.” Concerning Beata she would have said—“Of course she loves the boy—they were brought up together; but being in love with him is another matter. Beata, I think, will choose a *man* to give her heart to, if ever she gives her heart at all.” Moreover, Mrs. Winthrop's estimate of Geoffrey helped still more to throw her off the scent. “Those two are made for

each other," she often said to her husband ; " I wonder they haven't found it out already. It will come later, I suppose."

Hartley's sudden leaving of Walcote puzzled Mrs. Winthrop ; there had been a quarrel of some sort, she supposed. His sudden resignation of the secretaryship puzzled her still more, and the greater puzzle swallowed up the lesser. When, later, some fragmentary account of his quarrel with the Monctons reached her ears, the second mystery was solved ; but the first mystery became more insoluble than ever. " The boy's a fool," she said to herself, " and that settles it." " Gone abroad, is he?" she said, when she heard that further news ; " quite right too ; he will be more at home with those nasty foreigners than he is here." " Of course you'll never hear any more of him, any of you," she said to Beata, " unless he comes back like a bad penny ; it's out of sight, out of mind, with him." When, presently, he did come back like a bad penny, she wrote—" I suppose you'll see something of the prodigal again now ; be sure and give



me a faithful account of the first interview." For Beata, in answer to inquiries again and again repeated, to have to say that they had seen nothing of Hartley, and to have to read Mrs. Winthrop's comments upon the fact, was, though a lesser, yet a very real discomfort and pain to her.

The time came, however, in which she was to see him. In their evenings of music together, Geoffrey and Beata had come to have a deep love for some things that seemed to go right into their hearts, and utter their deepest yearnings. Of these things there was nothing dearer to them than many parts of the *Elijah*. One evening, when Geoffrey came in, he said,

"There is to be a very fine performance of the '*Elijah*' next week, at Exeter Hall. I am taken with a great longing to hear it, and that you should hear it. Will you go?"

"I think not; I don't feel quite fit for a great thing like that in public. You go by yourself."

"No, that I won't; we will go together, or not at all."



It was settled then they should go, and that Aileen should go with them. "Me, Geoffrey!" said the little one, when he mentioned her name; and her almost panting pleasure at the idea had no small influence in determining Beata at last to consent to the plan.

So Geoffrey got the tickets, and their places were in the front row of one of the side blocks of the reserved seats. When the evening came, they set off, allowing themselves, as it turned out, rather too little than too much time for the journey. They were in their seats only about five minutes before the performance commenced, and during that five minutes they were a great deal too much excited and too shy to look about them. When the overture commenced, they were braver, and the quick young eyes of Aileen first found out who was there."

"Beata, dear, there's Hartley," she said.

Beata's blood stood still, and her face grew as pale as death. "Where?" she said, scarcely able to utter the word.

Aileen showed her. He was in a central block, not a dozen seats from them, his face being towards the orchestra, and his side face therefore towards them. Beata's head swam, and her eyes grew dizzy; she could not see him after the first moment. She was so near to fainting that her body swerved a little, and her shoulder touched Geoffrey's. He looked round quickly; the music had been holding him.

"Why, what's the matter, Beata?" he said, growing pale himself at the sight of her.

His voice called up a little re-action, and the blood came back to her face. Her eyes looked towards Hartley; his followed, and he saw him.

"Shall we go out?" he said.

"Oh! no, sit still; I am better."

They sat still, Geoffrey holding her hand, and the great crowd lay before them like a dream, and the music went on, and sank and swelled, and wept and exulted and prayed, like the wild tossings of a maddened heart, which no one but God can comprehend.

Beata's eye-sight had come back to her,

and she could see clearly enough now the one for whom alone she then had vision. Hartley was there with a party, she saw—there were two other men, and four or five ladies. Three of the ladies were young and very pretty; their faces all beamed and grew fairer when Hartley spoke to them; they had no ears for any one else when he claimed them. He did not talk very much; he behaved well, and listened to the music. Beata saw one of the singers single him out to sing to. She did not wonder. He had grown taller, she thought, since she parted from him, and fuller and completer in his form, for certain. He was very handsome. The beautiful hair that hung about his royal-looking head she had played with and tossed away from his face a thousand times. There was the old imperative manner still, and these girls obeyed it just as she had done. His face was as full of life as ever; and the years that had passed over him only seemed to have made his youth the richer.

Yet she could see that there was a change. No one would have thought of

calling his face a hard one, yet a hardness had crept into it. In the old time, when his eyes looked into yours, you seemed to see right through them into his heart. Now you saw into his eyes, no deeper. They were powerful eyes still; they could shake your heart, but they revealed none of his. How could it be otherwise? A fickle heart will do as well as a loyal one for shining through handsome eyes, so it be a heart at all; but when even the fickle heart is dead, there is an end of heart-shine.

The music took three hours to come to an end, and to Geoffrey and Aileen they were three very long hours indeed. Hartley's presence was enough to spoil the music for Geoffrey, without Beata's suffering at all; that by itself was enough to spoil the music for both him and Aileen, though the child but half understood the cause of the pain. To Beata the hours were neither long nor short. Her emotion was too intense to take count of time, and when the performance came to an end, minutes or days might have passed with her.

The audience flowed out, and our friends joined the stream. In the lobby there was a waiting time, for the exit door was jammed. By this it came to pass that in the eddyings of the crowd, Hartley was brought quite close to Geoffrey and Beata and Aileen. The child caught sight of him again, and no longer awed by the silence of an attentive multitude, she sprang towards him, and caught hold of his hand, looking up into his face, and speaking out his name.

Hartley started, as though a hand from the spirit land had touched him, and looking down, he saw the child.

"Why, Aileen, what do you do here?" he said.

"I came to the music, Hartley; and Beata and Geoffrey are here."

Before he could have time to think, he had looked round, in the direction of the movement of the child's hand, and there he saw Beata and Geoffrey standing.

Beata had seen Aileen's movement as she sprang towards Hartley, and, had she had both the presence of mind and the will,

could have stopped her. The former she certainly had not, though the impulse flashed across her mind. Probably she had not the latter either, for presently, when all was over, she felt no regret at what had been done.

Hartley saw her standing, with Geoffrey beside her. She was as pale as she had been three hours before when first she saw him. You would have said that it needed a hard heart to resist the silent pleading of her face.

Hartley looked at her for a moment, giving no token of recognition, even; then he looked at Geoffrey with the same unmoved face; then he looked down at the child, saying,

“Good-bye, Aileen; I must go now;” and then, turning to his companions, he said, “I think we can get out of this door here,” and so it was over.

Aileen’s eyes filled with tears.

“Why didn’t he speak to us, Beata?” she said.

Geoffrey drew Beata’s cloak round her, and taking her arm in his, he pushed through the crowd, and walking on till he met a cab

that was not already engaged, they got into it, and drove home in silence. The only comfort that he offered to her was that he held her hand in his all the way home.

“Why didn’t Hartley speak to us, dear Beata?” Aileen said again, when they were in their room together. The question toppled over Beata’s self-command, and an hour of bitter weeping, during which Aileen sat awe-struck before a grief which she could not understand, was its fruit.

This was, in many respects, the hardest blow that Beata had had to bear. Always before, Hartley’s cruel words and acts had had the excuse of passion; now in cold blood he had stabbed her, and the stab was the cruellest of all. Even her tears gave her no relief, for with her pain was mingled a righteous indignation that tears could not soften. She had never felt this before. In all her previous times of trouble, though she had *believed* that she was doing right, she had *felt* as if she were being hard, and were injuring her dearest. But now there was no room for ingenious self-reproach.



In cold blood Hartley had insulted and stabbed her, and her indignation would have its way.

So strong was this, her new feeling, that for days she could not talk to Geoffrey about the meeting. So strong was it, that Geoffrey, half in hope and half in fear, thought that through it her heart would find emancipation, and be free of its great love. But it was not so; the indignation was the protest of love, not its death; the indignation was the pain through which her love became translated into a still higher level, and the sense of personal grievance became henceforth impossible to her. This higher level was not attained at once; its fruit will be seen hereafter.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

EXCEPTING only the event just recorded, the lives of Beata and Geoffrey, almost as much interwoven now as when they had passed together under the old Rectory roof, moved on with few incidents to disturb their even flow. They both worked hard, found refreshment in each other's sympathy, had memories to live upon, and slept the sleep that, for the most part, whether they be sad or joyful, God gives to His honest workers. And, for that matter, neither of these two was wholly sad or wholly joyful. Geoffrey was, in the main, very happy, for his nature was of that cast that an absent dear one, of whose love and thoughts he was sure, seemed to him almost as present as though she were by his side. It was well for him that it was thus, for otherwise he would have been very lonely

indeed. His child had now been gone on her travels four months, and since she started no tidings whatever of her had come to his ears. Mary had told him that they should not write to him, and he had had no expectation that she would change her mind. But the heart is not logical. He knew that he should not hear, yet the post-hour always brought him a space of unrest and disappointment. They had given him some notion of what their route would be. He began taking in a daily paper as soon as they were gone, and read through with most conscientious care the correspondence that came from those countries through which he supposed them to be moving. Had you asked him how much he expected to learn about his friends from these political letters that he so faithfully read, he would of course have laughed at your question as a joke ; yet when, week after week, he plodded through the columns, and found no merest glance at the fact that the writers were in the neighbourhood of so sweet a presence, he could not help thinking what dullards

they must be to so mistake the lesser for the greater facts. Geoffrey was by no means a fool, or wanting in his share of common sense, yet in this great love he had for his child his heart played with him at will, and filled his thoughts with such scented fancies and most fair delusions as belong, at most times, only to the most favoured provinces of the great world of dream-land.

In his more grave and solid thinkings about his child, Geoffrey had the reverent and heart-whole sympathy of Beata. He had no need to hesitate in the utterance of all that was in his mind, for the subject seemed as dear to her as to him; and in their thinkings they were altogether at one. There was no more reserve in Beata's faith in the completeness of Elia's nature than there was in Geoffrey's. It never once occurred to either of them to question whether, though they were parted for a century, or whatever happened, she would be strong and true to him. She was his wife, his mate, as truly as though they had been married for a life-time. Whether or not it

was likely that they would in this life ever be married at all, Beata and Geoffrey did not discuss even in their own thoughts; and had the question been put to them, it is probable that they would have been obliged to halt before an affirmative answer. But this made no difference. His child was his mate for time and for eternity, whether or not the priest pronounced their union, and whether the blessedness of full communion should begin for them before or after death. A conversation, the fringe of which touched him at this time, revealed to Geoffrey how deep his convictions upon this point were. The subject of the conversation was a man from whom, many years since, had been taken away by death the woman who was about to become his wife.

“Do you think he will ever marry?” said one of the speakers.

“I can’t tell, but I should think not. You know his history, don’t you?”

“No.”

“Indeed? Well, ten years ago, it must be, now, he was about to be married; but

his betrothed died a week before the day fixed for his wedding. He has never looked at a woman with anything more than common interest since."

"Ah! that's a pity. I think it is wrong to nurse grief in that way. There is a time after which such things become morbid, if they are indulged."

"He is not morbid—he is as cheerful and kindly as any one I know; but only he never seems to think of marriage as a thing possible to him."

"But he ought to think of it as possible."

"And forget his old love?"

"Not forget it; but such things are for this life; in heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

Geoffrey's heart blazed up at that. He could have stood, perhaps, all but the misuse of Scripture.

"You don't think that those words mean that, do you?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then I don't. There are marriages and marriages. If you mean that mere mar-

riages of the flesh end here, I say, yes, thank God, they do. But if you mean that hearts that God has joined together, He will put asunder when the body dies, then I differ from you, and I think that you blaspheme God and love when you say so. The best uses of this life will not be wasted in that way. Every true marriage is for ever, I am sure. There are marriages and marriages, you must remember, and you must not pervert Christ's rebuke of a sensual conception into a denial of the eternity of spirit-love.

Geoffrey spoke rapidly, and his face and manner glowed as he spoke. The person to whom his words were addressed was half inclined to be vexed at their ring of indignation and authority. He himself was unconscious that they had had either; but all that day he went about with his child before his eyes, and a most tender, defiant, exultant glow in his heart, such, on its human level, as the Apostle had when he cried, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Geoffrey exulted thus, on a human level; for all love is of God, and to doubt that the gifts of God are without repentance is of the nature of Atheism.

So Geoffrey's love lived in his heart, and, flecks of sadness notwithstanding, transfigured his being. With poor Beata it was far otherwise. To her, who loved not less truly and nobly than Geoffrey himself, her love was all pain. In her case, also, her dear one was absent; but in her case, alas! the outer absence was but the symbol of a heart absence which gave to that other all its bitterness. As Hartley in bodily presence was far from her sight, so she in heart presence was invisible to the eyes which he had shut against her. This made the bitterness of her sorrow. She, too, would have had the courage to wait till the new life for communion with her love, if only her love had been holding himself ready for that communion when the new life should come. But her love had shut his heart against her, and had set up a discord that promised to be



eternal ; unless God should have pity upon her, and attune their natures to each other and to Him.

“ Unless God should have pity upon her !” A growing sense of the All-Pitiful, a constant going out of her heart to Him, an increasing faith that in Him should her help yet be found—this it was that saved Beata, at this time, from finding her love all sorrow to her. Since she could remember, she had believed in God, had turned to Him in her saddest and her gladdest hours, had trusted her dear ones to His love. But for some time past the Good God had been hidden from her sight. Since her last rejection of Hartley, his bitter words against her, and the doubts that again and again had sprung up in her mind as to whether she had done her best by him, clouds had arisen around her heart, muffling and benumbing, as it were, her sense of the nearness of the Omnipresent Love. But in her darkness she was not disloyal ; the clouds were of earth, she was sure, and the great sun of Divine Love shone behind them. She trusted



God, and presently the Heavenly Love broke through the earth-formed clouds, and she felt God near her once more. And His presence awoke in her a great spirit of supplication; and while Hartley was going from bad to worse, and hardening himself in the deliberate worldliness which he had made the spirit of his life, Beata, keeping him always as near as ever to her heart, found her sorrowful love transmuted into prayer, and every thought of him became a yearning of her heart towards God. This grace came to her after the bitter meeting of the night of the music.

Thus much for the inner lives of these two. Of their outer lives a word must be said. It has been told that Geoffrey's second book met with a fair reception, even though at the time that reception gave but small pleasure to him who had written the book. Since then, under the influence of his new-born happiness, his capacity for all other happiness had quickened, and the loving esteem of many readers gave him much pleasure. The new book grew in favour as

the months went on, and a portion of its popularity brimmed over on to the first book, and gave it a new start in public notice. Geoffrey had come to be esteemed a rising author, and one or two of his later critics expressed their anticipation that his next work would give him a distinctive place in the world of literature. Such a prognostic as this could not but move him; but the emotion it awakened in him was of a much more grave than jubilant tone. A writer with a distinctive place meant a teacher to whose words men were inclined to listen. This was a solemn thought to Geoffrey, and the first effect of the prognostic was to send him carefully through the new book which he had in hand, lest peradventure there might be found in it things which some day he would be sorry to have said.

Geoffrey had a post that his rising reputation did not cause him to relinquish. Some little time after Beata had begun her school-life, a play-talk between him and Aileen suggested that he also should take

his share in the teaching of the little ones. Geoffrey at once caught at the idea, and offered himself to Beata as a weekly lecturer. Beata without delay accepted the offer, and closed with him upon his own terms. These terms were the same as those of Professor Teufelsdröckh — that he should occupy, namely, the chair of Things in General, at a salary of nothing a-year. This lucrative post, his rising reputation notwithstanding, he did not relinquish. Even had he been mean enough to do so, his vanity would almost have forbidden the act. The lovers of his books may have been the more numerous, but they must have been many indeed if the sum total of affection that glowed upon him out of Beata's school did not beat them hollow. In half a hundred infantile female bosoms he was a passion. His days were gala days, and were looked forward to the week through. His lectures (though lectures they were not) were given to the whole school at once; and though it became more and more the fashion for visi-

tors to be present at them, he never, on their account, modified either the matter or the manner of his teaching.

This share that Geoffrey took in her work was a great comfort and help to Beata. And, indeed, by its means and by others, her work grew constantly more and more sacred and dear to her. She did not get beyond her troubles. Not now, any more than before, did she find that poor children were angels disguised in print frocks. There were disobedient children and untruthful children, dull children and coarse children ; but there were not many children wholly without hearts, nor many at whose hearts sooner or later, with more or fewer mistakes, she could not somewhat get. Her children did respond to her, and the natures of some of them grew visibly under her hand. For this she thanked God, and her work had to her the sanctity of a benediction and a mission. She wondered sometimes what she should have been, with her great sorrow in her heart, if God had not given her this work to do. Her great sor-

row was good for her—of that she must needs be sure; God was very gracious to her in that to her discipline of pain He had added this consolation and mission of loving work.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

HARTLEY was at this time one whom all his friends delighted to honour. The eclat of his recent return was still upon him. His health was perfect, his beauty at its best, and his spirits jubilant. He was so much in request, that he was rather hard to get, yet so disposed to make himself agreeable that the difficulty fell short of the point at which grapes become sour; while by some means the fact of his ownership of the promising Walcote Mine had come to be pretty generally known throughout the circle of his acquaintance. It would have been hard had he not been a popular person.

Hartley's twenty-fifth birthday came round.

"I ought to give a party," said he; "but without either house or housekeeper I don't see quite how that could be managed."

"Your friends should give one for you,"

said Mrs. Rowsley, to whom his play-remark was addressed.

“An excellent idea. Will you do it?”

“I don’t know about that; but I’ll tell you what I will do. My girls were thinking of getting up some private theatricals, and I’ll give a party if you’ll join in the acting.”

“Agreed. Nothing would please me better.”

“I don’t think we must call it your birthday party. Folks would say we were setting our caps at you with a vengeance.”

Hartley laughed. “I shouldn’t mind such caps being set at me. But what’s in a name? So that we get the party, I don’t care what it’s called.”

The private theatricals were therefore agreed upon, and the play had to be chosen. Several persons were spoken to about it, and among them Miss Hazlitt.

“I’ll write you a play,” said she, “if you’ll promise to act it.”

“Will you act, too?”

“Yes or no, as you wish.”

“Then ‘yes,’ for a certainty.”

“You must let me know your actors, that I may try and fit their capacities.”

So recruits were canvassed for, and Etta was one of those appealed to.

“Will you take part in some private theatricals that we are getting up?” said Miss Rowsley to her.

“Yes, if you like, and if you want me.”

“Certainly we want you. We have but five at present.”

“Who are they?”

“Myself and my two sisters, to put the least worthy first; Miss Hazlitt and Mr. Leighton.”

Etta flinched, though no one saw it. To act in the same play with Hartley—that was hard indeed. Very well. It was hard, but she would do it. It would be harder still to draw back, and set them all gossiping and grinning at her.

“That’s capital!” she said.

“I suppose your husband wouldn’t care for such nonsense,” said Miss Rowsley, who was well schooled in the proprieties.

“No, I think not,” said Etta.



Four more promises were obtained, and the list of the names was given in to Miss Hazlitt.

The play was ready for rehearsal in a week, and, in a fortnight more, for performance. Then came the birth-day, and the party was given.

Before it, there had been a great scene between Etta and her husband.

"What!" he said, "going to make a show of yourself in public?" when she told him of what she had promised to do.

"They are *private* theatricals, I told you," Etta said, indifferently.

"I know that; but that does not prevent the exhibition being a great deal too public for a married woman."

"A married woman, indeed!" said Etta, not greatly caring whether her husband heard her words or not.

"And who are to be your fellow-actors?" said he.

"There are to be several; Mr. Leighton is to be one of them."

"And you mean to act with that fel-

low! By ——, but you shan't, though!"

"I think I shall."

Mr. Monsell swore vehemently that he would kill her before he would suffer it.

"When you've recovered your senses, perhaps you'll listen to a bit of reason," said Etta.

Mr. Monsell swore again that no reason under the sun should move him in this matter.

"Will you listen?" said his wife. "I was asked would I act, and I, without much thought, said yes. When I had promised, I was told that Mr. Leighton was to act too. What would you have had me do in that case?"

"What would I have had you do? Why, say that you would not act with such a blackguard, to be sure. There was no difficulty about what you should do."

"You are really a very wise man," said Etta; "somehow that did not occur to me, and as I forgot the right answer, you see, I must act."

"You shall *not* act," said Mr. Monsell.

"Very well, then, I shall go home. I have had nearly enough of this, and we can part upon no quieter pretext."

Mr. Monsell turned pale at that, for even yet he loved the woman. It need not be told that Etta had her way.

One other conversation that must be recorded took place before the night of the play.

"How could you write such a thing as that?" said Hartley to Miss Hazlitt, after he had read her composition through, and before the first rehearsal.

"Don't you like it? I thought it rather clever—for me. But if you *don't* like it, say so to the others; I daresay they will be able to find you something else that is suitable."

"I am sure I shan't say anything about it; but I think you might have written something pleasanter."

Miss Hazlitt smiled to herself; she was rather better pleased than before with her composition.

"I suppose you won't go to the acting?" said Etta to her husband.

“But I shall, though,” he said.

“Very well,” said Etta. She had not found it in her way to tell him what the play was to be. The parts that Etta and Hartley were to take had been apportioned them by Miss Hazlitt; they would each of them have played any part under the sun, now, rather than seem to care.

The play opened with a love-scene between a young man and a maiden. She was shy but yielding, and their troth was plighted. The parts were taken by Hartley and Etta. Their real love-scenes in the olden time were not more life-like. The audience was enchanted.

Scene two was between the young man and his mother—she expostulating with him for his rashness, but hoping that he would at least be loyal. He vowed eternal fidelity. Miss Hazlitt was the mother.

Then followed scenes in which the young man goes to another part of the country and sees new faces, seeming to find *presence* the most powerful of charms. The maiden hears of her lover's fickleness, and is disconsolate,

indignant, and resentful in turns.

A new lover appears upon the scene, not fascinating, but rich. The maiden accepts him, and so consoles herself.

The mother hearing of all these things, and mourning over her son's shortcomings, and being, withal, a Roman mother, and not afraid of severe lessons, writes to her son, and tells him that his love has come into a great fortune, and that he had better hasten back to her neighbourhood. The son obeys, and makes for the house that he is told is the new home of his betrothed. She, forewarned by the mother, receives him, reproaches him for his infidelity, is deaf to all his pleadings of unfaltering love, and all his explanations of his seeming inconstancy, and, inexorable to the end, rejects him with scorn. He, pouring maledictions upon her head, is about to leave her, when the husband appears upon the scene. A rapid dialogue ensues, at the end of which the disappointed lover is horsewhipped from the house.

So the play ended, or so the play was in-

tended to end. But in the *acting* of the play, the dialogue being finished, and the horsewhip being produced, Hartley turned sharply round, and wrenching the whip from the hands of him who represented the husband, kicked him gracefully off the stage; then bowing to Etta, he carried the instrument of torture to his severe though affectionate mother, who was watching the scene from the door at the side of the stage. The audience laughed boisterously; they thought that this was the proper end of the comedy. But Miss Hazlitt said,

“You have spoiled the play, Mr. Leighton.”

“Do you think so,” said Hartley; “I think that I have very much improved it.”

Most of the simpler-minded of the actors thought Hartley’s variation very good fun; but Miss Hazlitt was more angry than she cared to show, and Etta was maddened by it. The latter, however, held her peace, and when Miss Hazlitt, laughing, said to her,

“I am sorry that your false lover got off so easily,”

Etta answered,

“Are you? I liked it better so; the horse-whipping was vulgar, I think.”

And Miss Hazlitt could not make out the answer, nor tell how much Etta meant or did not mean by her words.

Among the audience, as he had promised to be, was Mr. Monsell. It would have taken less intelligence than his to see that, whether by accident or design, the play was a coarse parody upon the history of Etta and himself and Hartley. For himself, he had no doubt it was designed, and, if designed, to the design his wife and Hartley were parties, and she and her false lover had the brutality to stand up and make him, who had married her, the laughing-stock of the whole room. So it seemed to Mr. Monsell. Had the play come to its own proper ending it would have been bad enough; but when he, in the person of his representative, was kicked off the stage, and the whole thing ended in a roar of laughter at his expense, Mr. Monsell's passion grew beyond all bounds, and muttering curses upon the heads of all



concerned, he flung out of the house, and left his brutal-hearted wife, as he held her (for it must be remembered that he had no means of knowing that the play had not come to its intended termination), to find her own way home to meet his wrath.

After the play, there was dancing and supper. Etta heard that her husband had gone home without her. "I daresay he was tired," she said, and she seemed quite able to survive his loss. She appeared, indeed, to be in more excellent spirits than usual, and danced and talked and laughed, and ate and drank with the merriest, or beyond them. Hartley kept a quick eye upon her the whole of the time, and when she made a movement to go he went up to her, and said, "May I take you to your carriage? Mr. Monsell is gone, I think."

There were several persons standing by who could hear Hartley's words, so Etta bowed and took his offered arm.

"It was a fool's-play to-night," he said, as they went out. "I hope you know that I had no part in the shaping of it."



"I neither know nor care who shaped it," she said, "and I beg that you will never make a pretext for speaking to me upon such a subject again."

"As you please. I hoped you would care to know that I had not been guilty of insulting you," he said.

Etta looked at him with quiet scorn, and with no other adieu took her seat, and the carriage drove off.

Mr. Monsell was sitting up for his wife. "Well," he said, as she entered the room, "you have done a pretty good evening's work, I think."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you have degraded yourself and insulted your husband, and I call that a pretty good evening's work."

"We will talk quietly for once," Etta said; "it is due to us both, perhaps."

Mr. Monsell did not answer, but looked more fiercely at his wife than she had ever seen him look; and Etta was always most near to softening to him when he was hardest to her.

“As for degrading myself,” she said, “you know what I think about that? *I* think that I should have been more degraded by making a scene, and refusing to act with Mr. Leighton.”

“And I think that you would have been ten times less degraded than by acting the part you did in that play.”

“Perhaps, as you saw it.”

“What do you mean by ‘as I saw it?’” he said.

“I said that we would talk quietly. The play as you saw it was not the play as we rehearsed it. The proper ending was that Mr. Leighton should be horsewhipped. It was only by his unmeasured impertinence, by which, as always, he took the law into his own hands, that the other ending took its place.”

“I wish I had been one of the actors with the horsewhip in my hands; I’d have whipped him to death.”

“Then *you* would have taken the law into your hands. I would have been content to see him look a fool under the whip.

I would never have played the play had I thought to miss that."

Mr. Monsell's wife had never yielded so much to him. "Who wrote the cursed thing?" he said.

"Miss Hazlitt—for her own reasons, I suppose. I will find them out some day, I hope."

"She wrote it to please that scoundrel, no doubt."

"No, I think not. His *rôle* was not flattering enough to him to make one think so. Besides, he assured me that he had no part in it," Etta added, with a not pleasant laugh.

"He assured you!" said Mr. Monsell.

"Yes, indeed. He made it his business to conduct me to my carriage, and on the way he favoured me with his opinion that it was a fool's play, and assured me that he had no part in the shaping of it."

"The impertinent, cold-hearted villain!" said Mr. Monsell.

"He is that," said Etta.

Before his wife came home, Mr. Monsell had told himself a dozen times that he was

implacable ; that at last there was a final breach between himself and his wife ; that at last she had broken off his love. Yet, when they had ended their talk, by the communion of hate they were nearer to each other than they had been a dozen times during the whole term of their married life together.

So, even already, Miss Hazlitt's profane comedy was not without its worthy fruit.

## CHAPTER XXX.

HARTLEY rather expected that when next he met Miss Hazlitt, he should hear something more of his conduct on the night of the play, and he prepared himself to justify, upon all grounds, his act of self-defence. His preparation was, however, unnecessary ; Miss Hazlitt did not speak of the play at all, and her manner was, if different at all, rather more lively and friendly to him than usual.

For indeed Miss Hazlitt's interest in Hartley was too considerable to be much affected by momentary annoyance or pique. The night of the play had done for her all she hoped of it ; all she had now to do was to continue that pursuit of knowledge which had been her motive in writing it. Her further desire was to know still more of Hartley, and her special desire just now

was to learn something of those people who seemed to have had most to do with his early life. She had heard of his brother Geoffrey, and something of Beata and her place in his early life had come to her ears. She did not, however, know enough to satisfy her about these two, and to learn more was the task which she set herself at this time.

Of Geoffrey she had learned that he was an author, and that he taught sometimes; but she had not read either of his books. She found out and read his latest, and liked it. A plan of knowing him occurred to her, but she thought that she would give Hartley the first chance.

"I have been reading your brother's last book," she said to him; "you know it, of course?"

"No, I don't."

"Not? I wonder. It is a beautiful book. I should like to know him very much. Why don't you bring him amongst us some time?"

An evasion came to Hartley's lips, and it

was his pride rather than his veracity that kept him from uttering it.

"I never see him ; we've quarrelled," he said instead.

"Indeed ! That's a loss for you, I should think."

"Should you ?" said Hartley ; "this room's very hot, isn't it ?"

Miss Hazlitt had to recur to her own plan. Accordingly, she wrote a note to Geoffrey, and sent it to his publishers. The note was,

"Miss Hazlitt presents her compliments to Mr. Leighton, and would esteem it a favour if he would call upon her. She is desirous of extending her knowledge of literature under good guidance, and from the great pleasure that his last work has given her, she feels that she will be very fortunate if Mr. Leighton will consent to help her in her reading. She trusts she has not been misinformed concerning his occasionally sparing a portion of his time for such purposes."

Geoffrey had not at this time too much to do, so he called on Miss Hazlitt. She re-

ceived him altogether well—flatteringly to him, favourably for the impression that she left upon his mind. Geoffrey thought that she would be worth teaching, and Miss Hazlitt saw that he thought so. She hoped that she was not old enough to be past instruction, she said, and he must bear with her if he found her mental joints stiff with years.

Worth teaching she was; and, indeed, the teaching was rather a farce. Miss Hazlitt knew how to read almost as well as Geoffrey did, and their lessons generally became discussions, as interesting and stimulating to him as to her. Yet she did not doubt that he was her master. His mind was stronger, his views were wider, his knowledge was greater, and his tone was higher. All this she saw, and to it all she bowed. She said to herself that she would have been a better woman had she known this man earlier, and his visits were more to her than she could have dreamed they would be.

In her unexpected pleasure, Miss Hazlitt did not forget her purpose. She knew Geoffrey; she wanted to know, or to know



about, Miss Spenser. She was quite aware that Geoffrey had never been to college, but she made some remark that seemed to imply her belief that he had. He had not, he told her. She asked how it came to be so; and he told her. It must have been a dull life for him, she said. It was far from dull, he told her; and then Beata's name came forward. They spoke of her, and as Geoffrey had no snob's shame of poverty, it soon transpired that Beata was at the present moment earning her living in London. Then Miss Hazlitt said that she should like to know her, asked might she call upon her, and so her purpose was achieved.

Beata was at home when Miss Hazlitt called, and Geoffrey had prepared her for the visit.

"I am Mr. Leighton's pupil, Miss Hazlitt," she said, introducing herself, and laughing.

"And I am another of his pupils," said Beata.

"Yes, I know; that is one reason why I wanted to know you. You ought to be a very good and clever woman, as

you have been his pupil from childhood."

"It is not his fault that I am neither."

"He says that you are both."

They talked of Geoffrey and his books, and then of Beata's work.

"I should like to come and see you in your work," Miss Hazlitt said; "such idlers as I need some rousing."

"Work is a great blessing," said Beata, gravely, and with a cadence that caught Miss Hazlitt's quick ear.

"I am glad I know you," Miss Hazlitt said, "as well as Mr. Leighton. I have met your—what shall I call him?—Mr. Hartley Leighton, in company, now and then."

"Call him my brother," said Beata, with the cadence, stronger in her voice, and with a shadowy paleness passing over her face; "we were brought up together."

"Yes; so Mr. Leighton has told me," said Miss Hazlitt.

"And Hartley has told you, perhaps," said Beata.

"No; he has never spoken of you."

Beata, had she thought for a moment,

could have guessed that fact, yet she could not help the pain passing over her heart, and showing in her face, at the words. Miss Hazlitt saw the expression, and drew her own conclusions.

“Does Geoffrey know that you have met Hartley?” Beata asked.

“No; Mr. Hartley told me that they had quarrelled, so I did not speak of it.”

“I wonder,” said Beata.

“Do you wonder?” said Miss Hazlitt.

“Yes; but it does not matter. I can tell him.”

Miss Hazlitt left soon after this, and as she thought over her visit, and over Geoffrey’s visits to her, and the conversations that had passed between them, her interest in these two was so great, that the purpose for which she had sought them held but a second place in her regard.

And, indeed, in her purpose she had not made much way, though she thought that she had made a great deal. She had a pretty complete theory as to what had passed between Hartley and his old friends.

and what had parted them. Hartley, brought up with Beata, had won her love, and had then been fickle and false to her. For this offence Geoffrey had justly quarrelled with him, and so they were parted. This was Miss Hazlitt's theory—one that quite explained the apparent facts of the case, and so simple and obvious that anybody could have formed it. It tallied, too, with later facts. Released from his old ties, Hartley had started fresh in new surroundings. His conduct to Etta was but a repetition of his conduct to Beata. Her, too, he had wooed and jilted, and having jilted her, he was once more free. So Miss Hazlitt read Hartley's story, and this being her reading it is obvious, as has been said, that she had not made much real progress in her investigations.

A conversation with Etta somewhat shook her faith in the soundness of her theory, even if it did not greatly increase the amount of her positive knowledge. This conversation surprised Miss Hazlitt very much indeed—the fact of it even more than

the matter of it ; and how it came about that Etta should take the part that she did in it, needs some explanation.

Etta had said to her husband that she would endeavour to find out Miss Hazlitt's reason for writing the play. This resolve fixed Etta's attention a good deal upon Miss Hazlitt, and upon Hartley's relation to her ; and Etta, too, arrived at a theory.

"He shall never have *that* reward for his treachery," said Etta, "at whatever cost I prevent it !"

Etta's life for some time past had been shaped by three emotions. First and strongest was pride, which urged her to conceal, by every means, what had passed between her and Hartley ; second, was hate of Hartley himself ; and third, was dislike of her husband. By recent events and by natural growth, the second of these had so increased as to overtop the first, and now her life had come to be shaped almost by it alone. To have revenge upon Hartley was her one great aim ; to it she would sacrifice her pride, and in it she was drawn so close

to her husband, that she almost forgot to dislike him.

Etta saw that Hartley and Miss Hazlitt were in constant intercourse, and she not unnaturally inferred that they were great friends. "She is clever and rich," she said; "if he marries her, his fortune will be made. He shall *not* make his fortune so, if I can prevent it!"

So, to Miss Hazlitt's surprise, Etta began to cultivate her acquaintance. Miss Hazlitt was not, as a rule, gracious to women, nor was her regard of Etta such as to lead her to favour her with an exceptional manner, yet, in her way, she responded to Etta's advances. She was not specially gracious or loving, showed no disposition to make Etta her bosom friend, and did not court her company. But if Etta chose to talk to her, she was disposed to listen, and, after her own fashion, to help on the conversation.

Etta's purpose in cultivating Miss Hazlitt's acquaintance was simple enough; by what means she would seek to bring her purpose about she had but the most shadowy idea.

To volunteer direct abuse of Hartley she understood would not serve her much, even had she been disposed to adopt so crude an expedient. But, at all events, she had secured a post of observation, and she could but bide her time.

One day Etta was calling upon Miss Hazlitt, and a book was lying upon her table.

“Do you know this?” Miss Hazlitt said; “it is by the brother of our acquaintance, Mr. Hartley Leighton.”

“I should have thought you would have said your *friend*, rather than acquaintance,” Etta answered.

“Well, our friend, then.”

“I said your friend, not mine. He is no friend of mine.”

“Yet you were *great* friends once, were not you?” said Miss Hazlitt, looking at Etta.

“Yes.”

“And more than friends, I heard.”

“Yes, and more than friends.”

Miss Hazlitt wondered, but *she* had no reason to be shy of the subject; she went on:

"How came you, then, to be less than friends, if I may ask?"

"I found him to be a bad man, and I cast him off."

"Indeed! May I speak plainly?"

"Yes."

"I heard rather that he had jilted you."

"He told you so, I suppose."

"He has told me nothing. I asked him about it once, and yet he told me nothing."

Etta laughed. "You thought him very generous, no doubt."

"Or discreet; I don't know which."

"Well, whoever told you that he jilted me, *I* tell you that I cast him off."

Miss Hazlitt looked at Etta; she was puzzled by both the woman and her statement.

"You know that brother of his, and the person whom he calls his sister, Beata Spenser, perhaps?"

"Yes; I know them."

"Well, Beata Spenser cast him off too, because he was a bad man."

"How do you know that?"



"It is enough that I know."

"But suppose I don't believe you?"

"Then it will be so much the worse for you. You think of taking him on, if I guess right."

"Perhaps; but it's always dangerous to guess."

"Well, I have warned you. If you prefer to prove for yourself, you had better try it."

"You love him still," said Miss Hazlitt.

"Do I? I never thought to hate any one as much."

So ended that strange conversation, for at that point a servant came in and broke it, and it was not resumed. Leaving Miss Hazlitt's, Etta went straight to her home, and, her husband being out, she sat down to brood. She had said out her say against him at last, and had done her best to mar the fortune he was trying to make, as she had said she would. Had she not told the truth, too? Was he not a bad man, and had she not cast him off? A bad man indeed he must be, if his badness were measured by what he had made of her. Etta thought of

her old self, seeing as in the face of another her bright prettiness and loving simplicity of three years ago ; and then she thought of herself as she now was, and she loathed herself. “Is he not a bad man, indeed?” she said ; “for he made me this.” In saying so, Etta lied unto herself, for I, too, am in fault as well as my tempter, if I be led into sin ; but she did not understand that she lied to herself. “And I *did* cast him off,” Etta said ; “I did have that one revenge that he was dumb with shame before me. If now I get this other revenge that I spoil the fortune upon which he has set his heart, I shall be somewhat content.” So Etta sat and brooded, and the face of Hartley, as it had looked on that night when she had cast him off, rose before her, and stayed, and changed into the face of the earlier months which had stolen her heart away from her, till, when her husband came in and broke her dream, the revulsion of feeling was so great that she could only hasten from his presence and shut herself into her room, and lie groaning upon her bed, with not

even God to cry to ; because when man had been false to her, she had not turned for consolation to the Faithful and True, but had made falsehood her portion, and had dealt out to another worse measure than she herself had received. For in Etta's false marriage she had sealed her blindness of that overshadowing Truth and Love who can be seen only by those who are simple and true of heart.

Miss Hazlitt pondered a long while her conversation with Etta. It at once convinced her that she had yet to learn the true story of what had passed between Hartley and Etta and Hartley and Beata ; and so it shook her faith in her theory. But much more than this it did not do. Etta's words were too full of acrimony to be good evidence, she said, and Etta had manifestly a purpose to serve. Could Beata have said that Hartley was a bad man, and that she had cast him off, she would have had something certain to go upon. But that Beata would say no such words, even if they were true, she quite well knew, and she for

certain would not be the person who would dare to invite such words from her lips. But she would go and see Beata, at all events.

She went one evening, and stayed for two or three hours. Her quiet pleasure in sitting in this girl's room surprised even herself. They did not talk much, and their talk was neither witty nor pointed. Yet both its quantity and quality altogether satisfied Miss Hazlitt, and as she sat she felt herself a softer, kindlier, happier woman than the ways of her ordinary life often suffered her to find or to fancy herself.

Before she left she said to Beata,

"I saw your brother Hartley again, the other evening."

"Did you? How is he?" Beata answered quietly and simply.

"He is well, and prosperous, apparently. Shall I speak of you to him some day?"

"No, I think not; he would not like it. It could do no good."

"I wish I could bring you all together again," Miss Hazlitt said, with no other

meaning or intention than her words expressed.

“We shall not be brought together again—in this life, I mean,” Beata said; “but Geoffrey and I are learning to wait for our best things.”

Miss Hazlitt affected Beata after a not quite common fashion. Before a worldly nature you are silent about your holiest things. Before a spiritual nature you are silent, too, or but briefly suggestive, though for an opposite reason. Before a nature with but half-awakened spiritual capacities, you are apt to be more explicit in your utterances. Thus it was with Beata before Miss Hazlitt.

“Miss Spenser does not hate Hartley Leighton; that is clear,” said Miss Hazlitt to herself; “nor does she talk as if she thought him a bad man, and had cast him off. I understand him less than ever I did.”

Nevertheless, understanding him less, Miss Hazlitt, through the influence of Beata’s words, felt more warmly to Hartley, when next she met him, than she had ever felt

before, and her manner did not belie her feeling. Hartley perceived the change, and was surprised at it; and he had yet in him that much grace of nature that the new manner made him more diffident rather than bolder, and his changed manner, reacting, strengthened that first change of which it was the fruit.

Poor Etta's best card, then, had been played in vain. She had sacrificed the ace of her pride that she might capture the king of Hartley's favour with Miss Hazlitt, and that, so, the winning trick might be hers. But the trump card of Beata's reverent lovingness had beaten her ace, and, thus far, the game stood to win for Hartley.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.













UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 055294968